

SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

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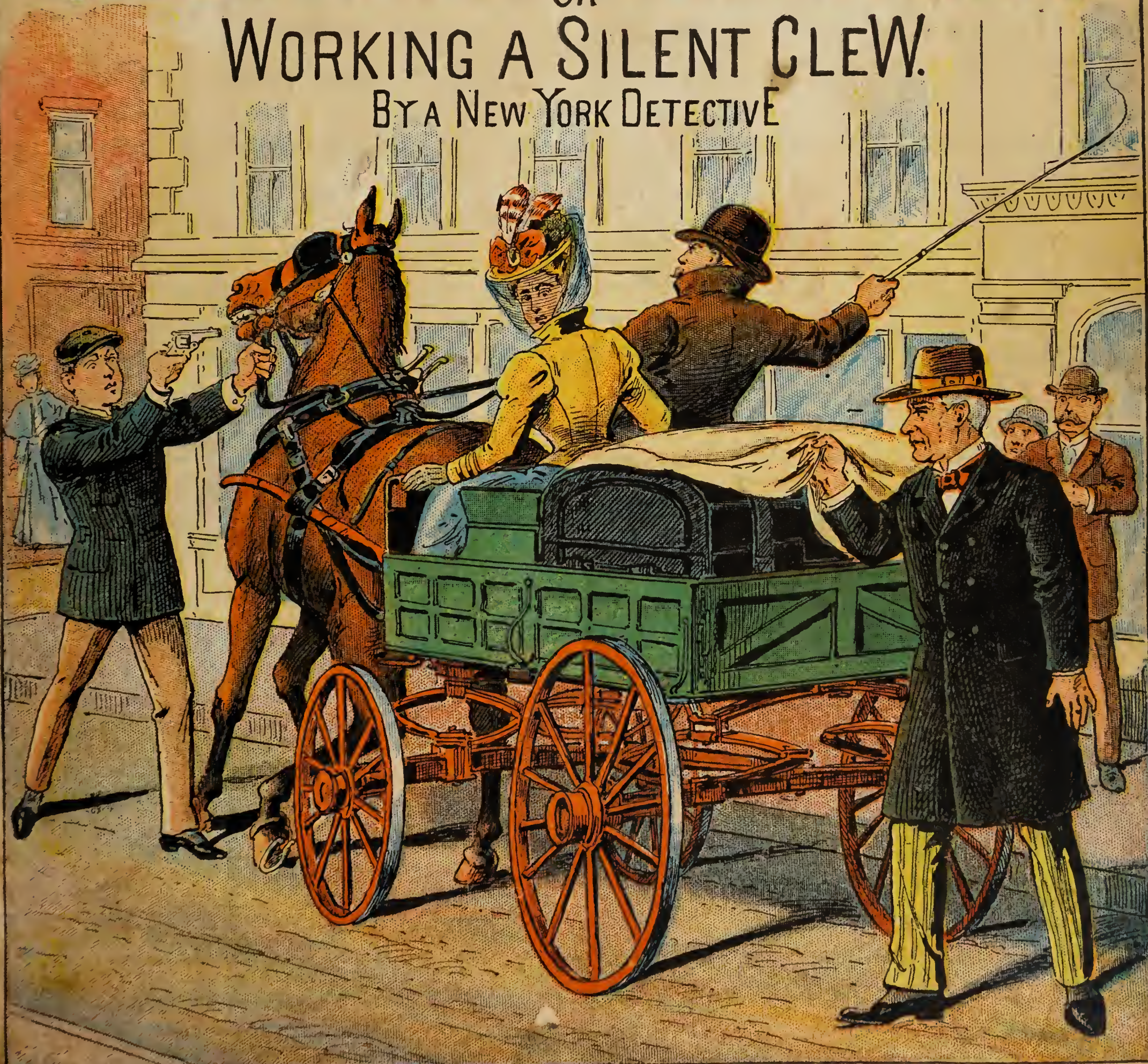
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THE BRADYS AND THE BLACK TRUNK;

OR

WORKING A SILENT CLEW.

BY A NEW YORK DETECTIVE



"Wait a moment," said Young King Brady, grabbing the horse's head and stopping him up short. Old King Brady, at the rear of the wagon, quietly lifted the cloth and saw the mysterious black trunk.

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CHAPTER I.

THE PARIS SPOTTER.

The chief of the Secret Service in New York sat at his desk smoking a cigar and reading a letter from Paris one night not long ago.

"Over \$300,000 worth of fine diamond-mounted jewelry to be smuggled into New York pretty soon, eh?" he muttered, as he laid down the letter. "Well, well! This promises to become a very interesting case."

Just then there sounded a knock at the door and a man entered.

He was known as Old King Brady, the greatest detective on the force.

James Brady was a tall, powerful old man, with strong features and white hair.

His clean-shaven face was shaded by a broad-brimmed white felt hat and he wore his shabby blue coat tightly buttoned up to his white collar and old style stock.

Saluting his chief, he exclaimed:

"I've finished the job you gave me last Wednesday."

"Ah," replied the chief. "You refer to the Jean Laroque case, don't you?"

"Yes."

"What did you learn?"

"That he is a rank fraud."

"Let me hear the details."

Old King Brady sat down and took a chew of plug tobacco.

Then, bending close to the chief, he said in low tones:

"As you know, this Frenchman has had an office in Maiden Lane for a year. He pretended to be the inventor

of a secret process for making imitation pearls, rubies and sapphires. In fact, he also claimed he could make diamonds. He sold these supposed imitations for a high price. The greatest experts could not tell them from genuine precious gems. I have found out that those so-called imitations are real bona fide stones. They are not bogus at all. In short, he has been selling thousands of dollars worth of jewels for much less than the lowest market price."

"Well?" said the chief, nodding.

"I have also discovered that he has never manufactured an imitation stone in his place. He merely pretended to do so for a bluff. The Custom House records fail to show that he ever imported any precious stones. And not a dealer can be found who ever sold him any. The question for me to solve then was, how could this man sell those jewels for less than it costs to import them?"

"Did you solve the mystery?"

"Not yet, with proof. But I've got a shrewd idea how Laroque manages to make a handsome income from what looks like a losing business."

"What is your theory?"

"Simply this: That every time the Frenchman goes to Europe he buys a large quantity of precious stones and smuggles them into this country. As he does not pay any duty on them, he can afford to sell them below the market rates as fine imitations, of his own make, and reap a large profit."

The chief laughed quietly.

Picking up the letter he had been reading, he said:

"Your idea is correct."

"How do you know it is?" asked Old King Brady.

"Read this letter and you will see."

He handed the letter from Paris to the detective.

Before Old King Brady had a chance to read it, however, a boy entered the office.

He wore a bicycle cap.

The style of his clothing was somewhat like that of the old detective. But it fitted him better and was more in keeping with the age of its wearer.

He was Harry Brady, the old detective's pupil.

Although he bore the same name as his partner, they were not related.

He was a fine, sturdy boy, full of pluck and sagacity, and it is doubtful if the older sleuth was more feared by the crooks than Harry was.

The two Bradys, working together, were a terror to the haunts of crime.

As he advanced into the office he sang out:

"Well, have you told the chief what we discovered?"

"Just finished my story," answered the veteran officer, glancing up at his pupil.

"And our theory about Laroque?"

"Yes. He says we have made no error."

"I'm sure we haven't, unless the Frenchman steals the gems."

"He don't do that, Harry," replied the chief. "Just listen to this letter, which was recently sent to me from one of our spies in Paris. Read it aloud, Old King Brady."

"If its contents are to be useful to us, I would like to have the boy make certain notes as I go along," suggested the keen old detective.

"Certainly. By all means," replied the chief.

Harry thereupon took a pencil and blank book from his breast pocket.

"I'm ready; go ahead," he remarked.

Old King Brady then read the following letter:

Paris, Oct. 20, 18—.

DEAR SIR:—I have the honor to report to you, regarding Jean Laroque, that I shadowed him from the moment he debarked at Havre from the steamship from New York. He proceeded straight to Paris. Here he spent two weeks. He first went to a store and ordered a trunk made after his own pattern. It was an oval top, 36-inch trunk, covered with black leather. Strong steel bands bound it, and were fastened on with large-headed brass nails. It contained a false bottom. The trunk was sent to Laroque's room at the hotel. Every day he purchased from various dealers a large quantity of very valuable jewelry. On a separate sheet I give you an exact account of the value of each piece, secured from the firms who sold them. He also bought a large quantity of unset diamonds, rubies, pearls and sapphires, of which I inclose an account. The total value of his purchases amounts to over \$300,000. All these pieces of jewelry and precious stones were packed in the secret compartment in the bottom of the black trunk. He placed his clothing in the upper part of the trunk. From the jewelers I procured photographs of nearly all his purchases. With my own camera I secured a snapshot picture of the black trunk. These pictures I mail inclosed. You will notice

that he had the initials J. L. stenciled in a star on both ends of the trunk. Having prepared to return to New York, he got a ticket for the steamer Normandie, and she sails on Oct. 25. As you know, Laroque is a very small, slender man, about five feet tall and weighing about 125 pounds. He has let his black hair grow bushy and let a Van Dyke beard of black grow upon his thin, sallow face since coming here. I have watched him and his black trunk day and night. The trunk is fastened with a peculiar lock, for which he carries two keys. I will cable you when he sails for New York. You can then have him arrested with abundant evidence of smuggling in the black trunk. Inclosed is also a picture of him which I caught when he was not looking my way. These photographs will serve to identify him, his trunk and the jewels he intends to smuggle. The separate list will give you a correct description and value of the contraband goods.

Respectfully yours,
TOM WREN, Detective.

Old King Brady laid down the letter and read the description.

Harry made numerous entries in his notebook as he proceeded.

They then examined the photographs, and when they finished the boy said:

"I suppose you keep Wren in Europe just for the purpose of watching out for people who intend to smuggle valuables into this country, don't you?"

"Bless you," laughed the chief, "he is only one of an army of spotters our Government keeps abroad for the purpose of preventing smuggling. It saves this country an enormous revenue every year. Without this system we would not detect one-tenth of the contraband games going on."

"It's pretty clear now that our theory about Laroque is right," laughed Old King Brady. "He's a dangerous smuggler. His plan for disposing of the smuggled jewels was a clever one and hard to expose. But we've got him nailed now."

The chief handed him a cablegram.

"Read that," said he. "I got it seven days ago."

The detective complied, and saw that it said:

"Shadowed Laroque and trunk to Normandie. Trunk in baggage room. Laroque in stateroom No. 4. Steamer sailed to-day.

WREN."

"Then he is on his way here?" asked Harry.

"Yes, and the steamer is due to arrive to-morrow."

"Do the customs inspectors know about this case?" asked Old King Brady.

"No. Not a thing."

"Then you want us to work up the case to a finish?"

"Yes. I'm doing this for the revenue department."

"I see."

"They are convinced that there's a dangerous gang of smugglers operating in and about the port of New York," said the chief. "I've offered to find out."

"In that case," remarked Old King Brady, in dry tones, "you suspect Laroque of being a member of a gang of smugglers, eh?"

"Exactly."

"Then it would be folly to arrest him on the pier. If he is in a ring, we had better let him pass his trunk through without molesting him. He will be thrown off his guard. When he goes away with the trunk we can shadow him. He may then lead us directly to his gang. We can then nab the whole crowd and break it up."

"I quite agree with you. I'll fix it so Laroque's trunk will be passed with no trouble."

"How?"

"Notify the revenue department. An inspector will be secretly instructed to chalk Laroque's trunk without opening it. You must be on hand to see who carries it away. Follow the trunk. It will be landed either in the hands of the Frenchman or his confederates. You thus stand a chance to get a line on the gang. If it stays in Laroque's possession, you'll have to seize it and arrest him."

"I hope it will act as a bait to draw his gang from under cover," said Harry.

The two detectives took their notes and the photographs.

By means of the latter they could easily identify the smuggler and his goods.

Leaving the chief they went to their lodgings to lay out a plan of action.

On the following day they were notified by the Maritime Exchange by telegraph of the arrival of the Normandie and proceeded to her dock.

As not many passengers were expected, very few people were waiting for the steamer to tie up at her pier.

The steamship company had furnished the Bradys with a passenger list, which had been cabled ahead from France. Among the names was that of Jean Laroque.

Before noon the steamer was warped up to her dock.

After the gangplank was run down the passengers debarked.

The two Bradys stood keenly scanning them.

But they failed to see Laroque.

"He'll appear to claim his trunk," said Old King Brady to the boy. "It is my impression that he is hiding somewhere till the trunk is landed——"

"Here comes the black trunk!" interrupted Harry, pointing toward the steamer.

Two porters who had been landing the passengers' baggage now came down the gangway carrying the mysterious trunk.

It seemed to be very heavy.

Leaving it upon the dock among the other baggage, the porters went aboard again.

The two silent detectives patiently watched and waited.

A Custom House inspector, instructed by his superiors, walked over to the black trunk and marked it with chalk as passed.

Passenger after passenger departed aloft and in car-

Finally all the baggage had been taken away except the black trunk.

Nobody came to claim it.

"He must have given us the slip and intends to send for the trunk," said Old King Brady at length. "Harry, we've got a slick man to deal with."

CHAPTER II.

A SEVERED FINGER.

Harry Brady was not at all satisfied with his partner's idea of the case.

"I am certain Laroque didn't leave the steamer at this dock," said the boy, "and I think we'd better go aboard, and find out what has become of him."

"Very well," assented Old King Brady, "I'll bet we won't find him, my boy."

They boarded the steamer and searched it from end to end, with no success.

Upon reaching stateroom No. 4 they opened the door and peered in.

The room was in a wildly disordered state.

All the bedclothes were scattered and tumbled in a confused heap.

"Looks as if Laroque had a nightmare," laughed Harry.

"What is this?" asked Old King Brady.

He picked up a small object from the lower bunk.

A startled exclamation burst from his lips as he held it up.

It was a human finger.

A gold ring encircled the lower part once and now lay on the bed.

The setting of the ring was broken off.

It was evidently the little finger of a man's left hand. Its shape showed this.

The ghastly object had been lying half hidden under the crumpled bed-spread, and a clot of blood from it left a crimson stain on the sheet.

For a few moments the detectives silently examined it, and the broken ring.

"What does this mean?" asked Harry at last.

"It looks as if Laroque had met with an accident that cost him a finger."

"You are wrong. That can't be his finger."

"Why not?"

"Didn't the letter say he was a small, light man?"

"Yes."

"How would such a man have a finger as big as that?"

Old King Brady was struck by Harry's remark.

He examined the strange relic again very carefully, and then replied:

"You are right. This came from the hand of a large man. The great size of the bones shows that. But whose can it be?"

Harry shrugged his shoulders. He had no idea.

Then he peered into the upper berth and saw it too was disordered.

"It looks as if somebody shared this room with Laroque," he remarked. "Perhaps it was this party who lost that digit."

"It's mighty queer," remarked Old King Brady thoughtfully. "I'll keep this finger and preserve it in a bottle of alcohol as a curiosity. The ring too is of great interest."

He wrapped them in a piece of paper, and put them in his pocket.

"Let's look further for Laroque," suggested Harry. "If we find him, we may get some information from him later on about that lost finger and broken ring."

"The man isn't on this ship."

"Perhaps one of the officers might tell us where he is."

They left the stateroom, and met the porter in the cabin.

"Did you see Mr. Laroque anywhere about here?" Old King Brady asked him.

"No, sir," replied the man, thinking they were friends of the Frenchman. "I have not seen him this morning, sir, but I carried out his orders."

"What orders?"

"Last night, at sea, he asked me to have his trunk brought up from the baggage-room and placed in his stateroom. I carried out his request. He then told me to see that his queer black trunk was one of the first carried out on the dock, so he would not be delayed in getting away."

"And you did that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was he in his room when your men went for the trunk?"

"No, sir."

"That's queer! Didn't he have a room-mate?"

"He did. A gentleman named Peter Briggs. He had the upper berth."

"Where is he?"

"Gone—bag and baggage."

"What sort of a looking man was he?"

"I'll show you his picture. A passenger took a kodak photo of a group of the first cabin passengers. Briggs was among them."

He took the picture from a closet.

Handing it to Old King Brady he pointed at one of the group.

Briggs was a tall, fine-looking fellow of thirty, with a full beard parted in the middle. His forehead was high, his nose of Roman shape, and he wore very stylish clothing. There was a frank, kind look on his face.

The detectives remembered seeing him going ashore with a big valise in his hand, and a spring overcoat over his arm.

He had been driven away with his trunk, in a public cab.

Old King Brady handed back the picture, and said:

"He's a nice looking fellow."

"Oh, yes. One of the pleasantest on the way over. He made but few friends, as he kept aloof from the rest. Laroque was the only one he seemed intimate with. But every

one who saw him said he was a kind and polite gentleman."

"I can't see where Laroque could have gone so suddenly."

"Oh, he must have passed you on the dock, and went ashore."

"We surely would have seen him, had he done so."

"Perhaps," said the porter in tones of indifference.

"Was his trunk checked?"

"Certainly. I suppose he will send for it, as he has the duplicate check."

Old King Brady thanked the man.

The two detectives then returned to the pier in a puzzled frame of mind.

Just as they reached the dock, Harry exclaimed in startled tones:

"By thunder, the black trunk is gone!"

"What?" exclaimed Old King Brady in astonishment.

"See for yourself," said Harry, pointing.

The old officer now observed that the boy told the truth. The trunk had vanished while they were aboard the boat.

Rushing down on the dock, they met the ship's porter again.

"Who took that black trunk away?" demanded Harry, breathlessly.

"An expressman. He just came for it. He had the brass check. See, here it is in my hand. No. 8. I gave him the trunk for the check. Mr. Laroque must have sent the expressman for it, sir."

"How long has he been gone?"

"Not more than two minutes."

"Did you notice which direction he followed?"

"Yes, sir. He turned downtown."

"Thank you!" said the old detective. "Come—Harry—hurry!"

They rushed from the dock to the street and glanced up and down. West street was, as usual, crowded with all sorts of vehicles.

Some distance away, caught in the jam which retarded its progress, was an open express wagon drawn by a spirited horse.

The driver wore a derby hat, and had his overcoat collar turned up.

But what attracted the detectives' attention most was a stylishly dressed young woman, wearing a veil, sitting beside the driver.

She looked out of place riding on a vehicle of that kind.

There was some sort of package in the wagon, but it was covered with a dirty white cloth which completely concealed it from view.

"Can that be the wagon?" asked Harry.

"It's the only express wagon in view," his friend replied.

"But the porter didn't say anything about a woman being on it."

"Perhaps he hadn't time. Anyway we can't go back now to ask him."

"Going after that wagon?"

"Decidedly. We must see if that's the black trunk, under the cloth."

"Come ahead then, or he'll escape, as he's turning the wagon up that street."

They ran after the wagon.

It had pulled into a side street and was going faster.

"I'm going to stop him!" exclaimed Harry as they hurried along.

"Can you get up a good excuse for doing so?"

"Of course I can. While I'm holding him you can steal up behind and get a good square look at what he has hidden under that rag."

"Run, then!"

The boy started off at full speed.

He was a fast runner and quickly overhauled the wagon.

"Say, there!" he shouted at the driver. "Hold on!"

The man glanced at Harry, whispered to the woman, and whipped the horse.

Harry darted out into the street ahead of the animal, and drew his pistol.

The old detective was close behind the vehicle.

"Get out of my way!" the driver roared at the boy, lashing the horse again.

"Wait a moment!" said Young King Brady, grabbing the horse's head and stopping him short.

Old King Brady, at the rear of the wagon, quietly lifted the cloth and saw the mysterious black trunk.

Although Harry was aiming his pistol at the driver, the man kept on furiously lashing the horse and swearing at the intrepid boy.

The lady beside him seemed to be greatly alarmed.

The only witness to the young detective's deed were a man and boy on the sidewalk beside the wagon and a young woman on the opposite corner.

"Confound you!" the driver yelled angrily, "what do you mean by this?"

"Oh," said the young detective, as Old King Brady made him a signal. "Excuse me. I thought you was another fellow that I've got a grudge against. It's lucky you ain't him, or you'd have gotten a leaden pill from this gun."

He let go the horse's rein, pocketed his pistol and stepped aside.

The driver scowled darkly at him, and urged on his horse, muttering threats at the boy for his impudence.

Old King Brady, having seen all he desired, had darted into a hallway.

Here he swiftly disguised himself while the boy held up the wagon.

With his old blue coat turned inside out, his hat pocketed, and a wig, beard and old bicycle cap on, he looked like altogether a different person.

"Meet me in an hour corner Grand and Bowery," he exclaimed as he flew past Harry, in pursuit of the wagon.

The boy nodded assent.

He was known to the driver now, and dared not be seen following the wagon, so he sauntered along leisurely and left his partner to do the shadowing.

Old King Brady kept his movements concealed from the driver.

It turned down into West Broadway and headed for the Battery.

"Can he be carrying it to Laroque's Maiden Lane office?" thought the old detective, as he boarded a car.

The electric car passed the wagon, and the detective now easily watched it.

Straight down to the foot of Greenwich street went the wagon, and Old King Brady alighted from the car far in advance of it.

Not far from the Battery the wagon paused before a combined saloon and sailors' boarding house, and the man and woman alighted.

The detective was lurking behind a pillar of the elevated railroad keenly watching all that transpired.

"Why did they bring that trunk here?" muttered the old detective.

He heard the man whistle in a peculiar way and several rough looking men emerged from a doorway and helped him carry the trunk into the house.

The woman went in with them.

CHAPTER III.

FOUND IN THE TRUNK.

"Once they get the black trunk in a room, they will take the smuggled jewels from the false bottom, and thwart us!" muttered Old King Brady.

The case was desperate, but he kept cool, and carefully considered.

"I must run the risk of following them in," he thought. "It is imperative that I prevent them getting that jewelry. No doubt they are wicked rogues. I may have a hard fight. But I've got my pistol handy. This looks as if Laroque had planned to have the stuff unloaded here to avoid drawing suspicion toward his office. He probably designs to have the jewelry carried from here to his place of business when he is certain nobody is watching him."

The detective strode into the saloon.

A stout German wearing an apron was behind the bar.

"Say, boss," said Old King Brady to him; "can I get board and lodgings here?"

The proprietor sized up the detective, and replied:

"Vos you got de money?"

"How much do you charge?"

"Fife tollar for vun week."

"Do you want it in advance?"

"Fer sure! Vat you tink?"

"Here's the money. Show me the room."

The detective laid a five-dollar bill down on the bar.

Seizing the money, the owner turned to a boy, and said: "Chakey, just vent up to No. 11 mit dis shendlemans alretty."

The boy nodded, beckoned the detective and passed through a side door.

Leading the way up two flights of stairs, he pushed open a door and said:

"Here's yer room, mister."

"All right," replied the detective. "What time do you have dinner?"

"One o'clock. We eat in the room back of der bar-room."

"Have you got many boarders here?"

"All full except this room."

"What are they?"

"Mostly sailors."

"And those who ain't sailors?"

"Oh, people like you who just chance ter come here."

"That will do. You can go."

The boy went clattering downstairs whistling a tune, and the detective entered the room. It was a dirty little place, but he didn't mind that.

"I'm all right so far," he muttered. "Now to find out where they put that trunk. I'll have to hunt about for them."

He stole into the hall, watching and listening.

There were several rooms opening on the main hall on each floor.

He went from one door to the other, peering through key holes, looking over transoms, and listening for the sound of human voices.

In this manner he carefully examined the floor below and the floor he was on, but neither saw nor heard anything of the men he wanted to locate.

There was one story above, and he ascended.

Here he quickly detected the sound of several voices. They came from the back room. He hastened quietly to the door. Here he paused.

The detective quickly recognized one of the voices as that of the driver of the express wagon, and the man was saying:

"Yes, I can open the trunk. I've got the key."

"Hurry up, then," growled a man's voice. "I want to see that jewelry. It's worth over a quarter of a million, and it's going to give each one of us a fine profit."

"Look out of the way, then," said the expressman.

The sound of a key rattling in a lock followed.

Old King Brady smiled, and muttered:

"I've just arrived in time!"

He drew his pistol, and tried the door.

It was not locked, and yielded.

He flung it open with a crash, and rushed into the room.

At one glance he saw that the place was occupied by the young woman, the expressman, and the rough-looking gang who carried the trunk in.

Everyone was intensely startled upon seeing him.

Recoiling from the black trunk, which stood in the middle of the room, with the expressman kneeling in front of it, they uttered cries of alarm.

"Look out!"

"Cops!"

"Run!"

Those and other exclamations were heard.

The detective leveled his pistol at them, and cried sternly:

"Throw up your hands, or I'll fire!"

For one moment the guilty gang hesitated. Then they rushed for a side door. Not one of them thought of fighting the detective. They were too scared. All hands were sure Old King Brady was an officer. And they felt certain he had a squad of police behind him. It therefore seemed to them that resistance was useless.

The only idea that possessed them was to escape.

With a cry of alarm the expressman and the woman went with them.

As the last one vanished through the side door, it was closed and locked.

"If it's a closet or small anteroom, I've got them in a trap!" thought the detective, lowering his weapon.

He rushed at the door, and tried to break it down. But it stoutly resisted.

"Hurry! Hurry!" he heard someone say impatiently in the anteroom.

The sound of their moving feet could be heard plainly for a while.

A loud bang ended these sounds.

Making another assault upon the door, Old King Brady finally broke the bolt socket which had been holding it, and ran in.

It was a small room, containing only a ladder leading to the roof.

The scuttle was closed, but it was plain the gang had gone through it.

Up went the detective after them.

By the time he reached the roof not one of the gang was in view.

They had evidently gone down through the scuttle of the next house and escaped to the street, for these two buildings were of the same height.

"Gone!" exclaimed the detective in disgust.

He tried to open the adjoining scuttle. It was fastened with a hook inside.

Finding it was out of the question to pursue the fugitives, Old King Brady returned to the room where the black trunk stood.

In his flight the expressman had left the key in the trunk key hole.

It was a very peculiar-looking lock, as Tom Wren had notified the chief from Paris, and the key was of a queer shape.

"Wren said that Laroque had two keys," thought Old King Brady, as he glanced at it. "It seems as if the Frenchman had reached shore without us knowing it, and given the expressman orders to get the trunk and fetch it here. He must also have given the driver one of his keys to open the trunk. Now, he surely would not have done that if the expressman was a stranger to him. He wouldn't trust all that valuable jewelry to a stranger. Oh, no! I see through the game. This whole gang must be

Before they can come back and interfere with me I'll open the trunk myself and abstract the jewelry. In an hour I'll have the stuff in the seizure room of the Custom House. Then I'll hunt for Laroque and his gang, and put them in jail."

He knelt down, and turned the key in the lock.

There came a sharp snap as the bolt flew back.

Rising, he lifted the lid.

Old King Brady recoiled with a cry of horror.

For there, in the trunk, was the corpse of a man.

And at a glance he saw that the dead man was Jean Laroque!

The horrible sight was so unexpected that the detective was startled.

He stood glaring at the doubled-up figure of the little French jeweler, and wondered what the meaning of this strange mystery might be.

When he finally recovered from the shock, he exclaimed:

"By thunder, he must have been murdered!"

He then carefully examined the position of the body.

It was lying on its back, the legs bent in order to crowd them in, and the arms hung straight down and rested on the outside of the thighs.

Laroque was such a small, slender man, that it was an easy matter to put his body in a 36-inch, oval-top trunk.

He was fully dressed, but wore no hat, of course, and his body was cold from having been dead some length of time.

The detective saw that his hands were uninjured; hence it was manifest that the severed finger did not come from him.

In order to better examine the body, the detective lifted it from the trunk and laid it upon the bed.

Here he quickly found that death came from a pistol bullet in the heart.

The ball had penetrated under the fifth rib.

There was no money in the pockets nor jewelry on the dead man's person.

Going back to the trunk, Old King Brady examined the interior.

It was empty.

The clothing, which had been packed in the upper part, in Paris, was gone.

He next searched for the lid of the false bottom Wren had mentioned.

It was very difficult to find the cleverly hidden opening, but he finally saw two lumps under the lining cloth, and, pressing them, they released two tiny bolts.

He then lifted out the partition.

The false bottom was disclosed. It was a shallow compartment.

But it was empty.

The jewelry and precious stones were gone.

A grim look settled upon the detective's face, and he muttered:

"Poor Laroque! He is a victim of his own villainy. Somebody on the ship knew he had those valuables in this trunk. He was murdered. The jewels were then stolen.

His body was put in the trunk. Then the assassin escaped. He must have sent the trunk key to the driver of the express wagon, and ordered him to bring the trunk here. It's plain enough. As the assassin knew the expressman and his gang, he must have been one of their number. It's evident he did not let them know he killed Laroque and put his body in the trunk. One thing proves this. It was the remark I heard one of the gang make before they tried to open the trunk. He said: 'I want to see that jewelry. It's worth over a quarter of a million, and it's going to give each one of us a fine profit.' Now, who was guilty of this awful deed? Upon one man alone suspicion rests strongest. That man is Briggs, the person who shared Laroque's stateroom. He could not have been in that room and not know that the Frenchman was murdered. The last time Laroque was seen alive was last night. From then no one seems to have seen him on the steamer. Therefore this deed was done last night. We must find Briggs. He probably has the missing jewels. And he alone must know how this poor wretch was killed. I'll have the body removed, now, and then I'll get Harry and see if we can't run down the assassin of Jean Laroque."

He started toward the door, when it was pushed open, and Young King Brady walked in, saying in laughing tones:

"Well! I've found you, have I?"

"Harry! By Jove, I'm glad you've come. See there!"

He pointed at the corpse of the jeweler, and the boy saw at a glance that the body had been taken from the black trunk.

"A murder mystery, eh?" said the young detective, quietly.

"Yes, and that smuggled jewelry led to this dreadful crime, Harry!"

CHAPTER IV.

LOCATING A SUSPECT.

When Old King Brady told Harry all that happened, he asked the boy:

"How did you happen to find me here?"

"Quite easily," replied the young detective. "Instead of going to the corner of the Bowery and Grand street, I followed the express wagon. I saw it standing at the door. The driver and veiled woman and gang of tough-looking men came out of the hallway, next door. They got in the wagon and drove rapidly away."

"Just as I expected," remarked the old detective. "They must have passed over the roof when I chased them out of here and went down through the next building to the street. They've given us the slip."

"Well, we'll know them if we ever meet them again. I caught a good view of their faces. I won't forget them in a hurry. You should have seen that driver glare at me when he just drove away. He remembered how I stopped his

horse so you could look under the cloth to see if his wagon contained the black trunk. I suppose he now suspects I'm a detective and had a reason for halting him."

"I'm sorry you didn't stop them from getting away."

"How was I to know what I now know?"

"That's so."

"Well, I noticed that the trunk wasn't in the wagon, and suspected that they'd carried it in next door. A newsboy told me they'd taken it in this house. So in I came. I was hunting for the trunk in the different rooms when I landed here."

"It's lucky you came. I need your aid very badly."

"So I can see."

"We must have this body removed from here."

"Yes."

"Then we can try to find out who killed this poor fellow."

"Shall I notify the police?"

"Certainly. They can take charge here. That will leave us unhampered to act as we see fit. While you're gone, I'll try to find out from the owner of this joint who that gang is that just escaped us."

"Very well. Come ahead."

They left the room together.

Old King Brady locked the door and put the key in his pocket.

Descending the stairs to the street, Harry hurried away to the Church street police station and Old King Brady entered the saloon.

Walking over to the proprietor, the old detective displayed his shield and said:

"Do you see that?"

"Vhy—vhy—you vos a boliceman," stammered the man, getting red in the face.

"A detective," corrected Old King Brady, sharply.

"Dot vas so. Vos dere some drubbles?"

"Yes; a lot. There's some dark work going on here."

"Ach! I didn'd done noddings wrong."

"Well, you may go to jail if you don't tell me the truth when I question you."

"Vot apoud?"

"The expressman and woman, and the gang who brought the black trunk in here."

"But vot I can dell you apoud dem beoples?"

"Do you know who they are?"

"No. Not dot vomans or dot oxbress mans."

"Who were the rest of the gang?"

"Dey jüst vos come here to poard yesterday."

"Don't you know their names?"

"No."

"What business are they in?"

"Sailors dey say."

"Out of work?"

"Yah."

"How many in that crowd?"

"Fife."

"From what ships?"

"Dey dond dell me noddings."

Old King Brady considered a moment.

He saw that the hotel-keeper was telling the truth. The very fact that he was not questioned as to his name or occupation when he hired a room showed him that the same thing could have applied to the gang.

He kept on questioning the man till the police patrol wagon arrived with Harry and several officers, but gained no valuable information.

When the owner of the place saw the police, he got scared and asked:

"Vos dey raid me mein hotel?"

"No," replied Old King Brady. "They've come to take charge here awhile though."

"For vot?"

"Because you've got a murdered man in the house."

"Mein Gott! Who vas killed?"

"Jean Laroque. Do you know him?"

As he made this blunt reply he narrowly watched the man's face.

The hotel owner's face wore a blank expression, though, and he shook his head.

"No. I don't know dot feller," he replied. "Do he lif here?"

"He was brought in here dead, packed in a black trunk."

"Dot trunk dose fellers pring from dot vagon?"

"Yes," replied the detective, nodding.

"Donner vetter! If I vos know dot, I don't vould let dem in."

Just then Harry beckoned to Old King Brady, and said: "You'll have to let us in the room."

"We'll bring up the stretcher," said one of the policemen.

They then ascended to the top floor.

Old King Brady unlocked the bedroom door and they filed in.

The body of the murdered man was carried from the room by the policemen and as the black trunk was of no further use, they left it where it was.

Old King Brady closed the lid, locked it and pocketed the key.

They then proceeded to the police station and made a report of the case.

This done, the two detectives hurried away to headquarters and notified the chief of the strange occurrences. He was amazed at their story.

A grave look settled upon his face and he said:

"You've got a very mysterious case on your hands, I see."

"We'd solve the mystery if we could lay our hands on Briggs," replied Harry.

"Do you think he is the guilty party?"

"I can't say. It's fair to presume he is. But he must know something about it."

"He may not know a thing about it. He may be innocent of a hand in it."

"We'll find that out when we catch him."

"You've proven one fact, anyway."

"To what do you allude, chief?" asked Old King Brady.

"I mean that you've clearly shown that Laroque isn't, or rather, wasn't, alone in this smuggling business."

"How have we proven that, sir?"

"By the remarks you overheard one of the gang make, just before you bounced in on them, before they tried to open the trunk. The man said, in reference to the jewelry in the black trunk, 'It's going to give each one of us a fine profit.' Now, that expression shows plainly that the gang shared Laroque's profit, don't it?"

"Just so," assented the old detective, taking a fresh chew of tobacco.

"Well, then, now that Laroque no longer figures in this case, you will have to run down his gang and put them out of the business."

"That's exactly what we intend to do."

"Besides that, you must find the jeweler's assassin. You have a good clew to the man's identity. He lost a finger in his fight with Laroque. And he has got possession of all that smuggled jewelry, and those loose jewels. Once you learn of that stuff being sold, you ought to locate your man easily enough."

"You will probably hear from us in a short time," said Old King Brady.

Then he and Harry departed.

They went home and preserved the severed finger in alcohol.

This silent clew was a very meager start, but it was better than nothing.

A plan of action was carefully laid out, then they left the house.

While Old King Brady returned to the steamer to make some further investigations, Harry proceeded to furnish all the pawnbrokers and jewelers of New York with printed descriptions of the missing jewels. They were warned against taking them from any one, and were requested to hold any one for the police who offered the jewels for pledge or sale. It was nightfall before the descriptions were mailed.

The detectives met again at their lodging.

Harry told what he had done, and said in conclusion:

"I've sent a spotter to watch the sailors' boarding-house. I gave him an accurate description of the gang we want. If he sees any of them come back he is to notify us and arrest the men on sight."

"You've done very well," remarked Old King Brady. "But I doubt if any of that crowd will go back there in a hurry. They fear arrest. You know as well as I do that a crook dreads arrest more than any one else does. He'll run and hide, sooner than have a fight, if he has a chance to get away."

"But you must recollect one thing of importance," replied Harry. "Those fellows didn't know anything about the dead body being in the trunk. They thought it contained the smuggled jewels, as their conversation showed. Now as those jewels are a sore temptation to them, they may steal back with the hope of getting them. Then we can get the nippers on them."

"They won't try it after to-night."

"Why?"

"Simply because the newspapers have already learned about the finding of the body in the trunk and have gotten out extras about the mystery. That will give the whole snap away to the gang and cause them to keep away from the hotel."

"Confound the newspapers!" exclaimed Harry, with a look of disgust upon his face. "They often baffle the ends of justice in their greed to give publicity to crimes before the police department has a chance to hunt down the culprits. How did you make out on board the Normandie?"

"Very well. I've sifted the crew and entire passenger list. Not a soul on that ship seems likely to be guilty except Mr. Briggs."

"Did you find out what became of him?"

"Yes. I ran down the public hack that carried him from the steamer, and learned that he had been carried to the Astor House."

"But you ain't sure he's there now, are you?"

"Oh, yes I am. He's there, fast enough, and I've seen him."

"Did you speak to him?"

"No. Simply located him. This done, I placed a spotter to watch him till I return. I'm going back there now to interview him. I want you to go with me. If we find he has got Laroque's jewels, it will be pretty good evidence that he's the guilty man, and we can risk arresting him."

"How about his left hand; was there a finger missing from it?"

"I didn't have a chance to see. He kept his hands in his pockets all the while I was shadowing him in the hotel restaurant."

They spoke at some length further about the case, then Old King Brady abandoned his disguise and they went out together.

It was a clear, cool night.

Boarding a car, they rode downtown.

In due time they reached the Astor House and alighted. Meeting the spotter at the door Old King Brady asked him:

"Is our man inside yet?"

"Yes, sir," was the pleasing reply.

CHAPTER V.

MR. BRIGGS' HANDS.

The two Bradys entered the hotel, approached the clerk and Harry asked him:

"Is Peter Briggs in?"

"Yes, sir. Do you wish to see him?"

"I do. Kindly send up my card and say it's important."

"Take a seat," said the clerk, calling a boy.

The card simply bore the name, Harry Brady, and the boy carried it upstairs.

In a few moments he returned and said:

"Mr. Briggs is in his room, sir. He says you may go up."

"Show us the way," said Old King Brady.

The boy led them up to the second floor and knocked at a door.

"Come in," said a man's voice on the other side of the panels.

The boy departed and the detectives entered a pleasant bedroom.

Peter Briggs stood in the middle of the room glancing at them curiously.

He was a tall, heavily built man, with a kindly expression on his face, and his hair and beard were neatly brushed.

There was nothing in the room belonging to him except a trunk and valise.

"Well, gentlemen," he remarked, as Harry closed the door.

"Mr. Briggs, I believe," said Old King Brady, politely.

"Yes, sir, and you are Mr. Brady, I presume."

"Just so."

"And the nature of your business?"

"We are Secret Service detectives."

"Indeed!" replied Mr. Briggs, with a surprised look.

"We want some information from you, Mr. Briggs."

"Upon what subject?"

"A matter of vital importance."

"Pray be seated, gentlemen. If I can assist you, I shall cheerfully do so."

The detectives were keenly watching every expression of his face. He seemed to be totally unconcerned. In fact, he looked mystified over what his caller said.

All the while he spoke he had been keeping his left hand in his trousers pocket.

The Bradys noticed this.

It led them to think it was a maimed hand and that he was hiding it.

They sat down and Old King Brady asked him:

"Were you acquainted with Jean Laroque?"

"Oh, yes. I knew a gentleman of that name. He was my roommate on the steamship Normandie on which I just arrived from France."

"That's the man I refer to, Mr. Briggs."

"Now, what about Mr. Laroque?"

"He was murdered, robbed and his body was packed in his trunk."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Briggs, in shocked tones. "Horrible! When did it occur?"

"Last night, aboard the steamer," replied Old King Brady, keeping his sharp, searching glance intently fixed upon the man's calm face.

"May I ask how you happen to know this?"

"Certainly. His body was found and carried to the morgue."

"When?"

"To-day."

"Who found it?"

"I did."

"On the steamship?"

"No."

"Where?"

"In a sailors' lodging house on Greenwich street."

"How singular."

"Not at all. I tracked the trunk there from the steamer."

"I see. Then you knew about what it contained?"

"Oh, no."

"Then why did you track it?"

"Because I knew it contained some valuable jewelry which Laroque was bringing over to smuggle. This jewelry was stolen by his murderer."

"What a fearful crime."

"Yes, indeed. We are now looking for the assassin."

"Do you suspect anybody?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"You!"

"Me?"

"Exactly! That's why we are here."

Mr. Briggs turned as pale as death.

The detectives noticed his agitation and exchanged meaning glances.

For a moment Mr. Briggs paced the floor nervously, then he asked:

"How can you connect me with this awful crime?"

"Easily. You shared his stateroom. He was last seen in your company. The value of his jewelry was great enough to tempt any unscrupulous man to kill him for it."

"There must be some dreadful mistake here, Mr. Brady."

"Why?"

"Simply because it's absurd to think I'd do anything like that. I didn't kill the man. In fact, I didn't know he was dead until just now. The revelation gave me a queer shock. More so that you accuse me of that appalling deed."

"Well," said Old King Brady, coolly, "the evidence against you is very strong."

"Oh, it can't be. Have a little common sense. Do I look or act like a man guilty of taking a fellow creature's life? If I robbed the man wouldn't I run away and hide somewhere? Did you ever hear of a criminal living as openly and fearlessly as I've lived here since quitting the steamship?"

"Frankly, no."

"Then what are you giving me—a scare, for a joke?"

"No, indeed. We are very much in earnest, Mr. Briggs."

"Have you any evidence strong enough to convict me?"

"Only circumstances."

"Bah! How many innocent men have been condemned on such paltry proof."

"Well, that's not the point," said Old King Brady. "Let me see your hands."

Mr. Briggs withdrew them from his pockets and held them up.

They were small, white, well-cared-for hands, without a blemish.

None of the fingers was missing, either.

This fact puzzled the detectives. Both were sure they would see that the little finger of the left hand had been cut off. Such was not the case, however.

"What next?" demanded Mr. Briggs with a frown.

"Do you object to our searching your baggage for evidence that you robbed Mr. Laroque after he was killed?" asked Old King Brady.

"Not in the least. I'll unlock the trunk and valise for you, sir."

And he did as he said.

The two detectives carefully searched the receptacles. None of the missing jewels was found, though. Then they searched the room with no better success.

"Not a thing!" announced Harry in disgust.

"Are you satisfied?" demanded Mr. Briggs, with dignity.

"Not yet," Old King Brady replied. "We would like to know how that man could have been murdered in his room and you not know anything about it?"

"If he was killed in his stateroom last night, it is the simplest thing in the world to explain my ignorance of the crime. I wasn't in the room last night."

"You were not, eh?"

"No, sir, and I can prove it by the steward, Dan Marsh."

"Why weren't you in your room?"

"Because after supper I went to the smoking room on the upper deck and became interested in a very stiff game of poker. Several of the passengers were playing. When I went in the game every one dropped out except Marsh and me. Every one finally retired. Marsh and I kept playing. There was no limit to the game. We kept winning big stakes from each other alternately. That made the game interesting and exciting. In fact we were so absorbed that we played all night. On the following morning I went to my room a heavy winner."

"Wasn't Laroque there then?"

"I didn't see him. His berth was all mussed up, as if he had slept there. Besides that, his trunk was in the room. He evidently had it brought from the baggage room during my absence, for on the trip over the ocean it wasn't in our room."

"What did you do in the stateroom?"

"Washed, got my valise and coat and went out to breakfast. The steamer landed and I hastened ashore, and, having had my baggage passed, I came here in a cab."

All this was told with such simple candor that the Bradys felt their suspicions of the man weakening.

Unless he was a terrible liar and a fine actor, he could not have explained matters so plausibly, or looked like such an innocent man.

Old King Brady reflected a moment.

He then asked:

"Didn't you see anything of Jean Laroque since last night?"

"No!" was the emphatic reply. "The last time I laid eyes on him was at the supper table aboard the steamer.

He and I struck up quite a friendship during the trip over. In fact, he's the only one on board I had much to say to. I suppose that was because we occupied the same room."

"So I've heard," replied Old King Brady.

"Will you give me the details of the crime?"

"Certainly. There's no harm in that. The newspapers will have it to-night."

He detailed the main points of how the murder was discovered.

Mr. Briggs listened intently and Old King Brady finished by asking him:

"What business are you in, sir?"

"None at present. I'd gone to Paris on a pleasure trip."

"Are you a New Yorker?"

"Oh, no. I'm a Californian."

"Never been here before, eh?"

"No, indeed. I don't know a soul here."

"Going back to California?"

"To-morrow, unless I am detained by this unfortunate affair."

"Well," said Old King Brady, "I'm going to see the steward of the Normandie and if he backs up your story about your movements last night on the ship, I will be convinced of your innocence in the matter."

"That is satisfactory to me," said Mr. Briggs, with a faint smile. "And to show my good faith, I shall remain right here until I hear from you again. If you have any doubts about me still, I have no objection to your having me watched until you return."

"That's a fair proposition," laughed Old King Brady. "And I'll take you at your word, sir, and place a detective to keep his eye on you."

"Very well. That's business," replied Mr. Briggs, smiling and nodding. "You'll find, though, that your suspicions of me were groundless."

"I hope so. We will go now."

They shook hands and parted.

In the hall Old King Brady turned swiftly to Harry and whispered:

"You stay right here in plain view of his door. Dog him everywhere he goes. It don't matter if he sees you doing it. I'm going to the steamer."

"What do you think of him?"

"He seems to be wronged by our suspicions of him."

"Yes."

"But he isn't wronged. He deserves our suspicions. I think he's the man who killed Jean Laroque, in spite of his innocent air."

CHAPTER VI.

THE MEETING IN BATTERY PARK.

Old King Brady hastened away from the Astor House, and made his way as rapidly as possible to the French line steamship dock.

Going aboard the *Normandie*, he met the captain.

"Is Dan Marsh on board, sir?" he asked the officer.

"No," the captain replied. "He is gone."

"Where?"

"I don't know."

"When will he return?"

"Never. He threw up his job."

"What for?"

"I don't know. An hour after the ship entered port he came to me and resigned. His baggage consisted of a valise. He carried it away in his hands. That's the last I've seen of him. I don't know where he's gone, or where he lives."

"Does anyone else?"

"Not that I know of. But you might inquire of the officers and waiters."

Old King Brady was intensely disappointed.

He made numerous inquiries, but no one seemed to know anything about the steward. He had dropped out of sight as suddenly and mysteriously as if the earth had opened and swallowed him.

The detective attached some importance to this fact.

He resolved to hunt for Dan Marsh and find out why he had gone off so suddenly.

"Something queer about it!" he muttered.

Then he returned to the Astor House.

Here he was surprised to find that Harry had vanished.

The old detective searched for him, but failed to find him.

"Where the deuce has the boy gone?" he muttered at last. "I told him to watch Briggs' door. Could he be in the room?"

Knocking at the suspect's door, he received no reply.

Trying the door, he found it locked. He climbed up on the knob, and peered through the small transom.

The room was vacant.

Evidently Briggs had gone out.

"Harry must be shadowing him," thought the detective.

He hung around the hotel for several hours, and as the boy failed to make his appearance, he finally went home.

Young King Brady was on the man's trail.

Soon after the old detective had gone, Briggs emerged from his room.

He wore his hat and coat.

In the hall he glanced swiftly around, but failed to see the young detective, who had hidden in a nearby vacant room.

Harry was peering through the keyhole into the hall.

He saw Mr. Briggs come out, observed the cautious manner in which he looked up and down the corridors, and observed him heading for the stairs.

"Suspects he's being watched," cogitated the boy.

He was an adept at disguises, and wore a suit which was prepared for sudden changes. He quickly altered his appearance.

When he emerged from the room Briggs would not have known him, for he now had every appearance of being a mechanic.

A greasy blouse and overalls of blue jean covered his body, he wore a torn cap, a red wig was on his head, and his face was smudged with soot.

With no fear of exposure he went downstairs almost at Briggs' heels.

The man went out on Broadway.

People were surging along the sidewalks, and trucks, wagons and cable cars filled the street.

Mingling in this moving sea of humanity, Briggs went downtown at a rapid pace and finally reached the Battery.

Several times he glanced back over his shoulder.

His sharp glance swept over everybody near him.

It was manifest that he was looking for a pursuer.

He looked squarely at Harry once, but failed to recognize him.

But he was not entirely satisfied with these keen glances, for he knew very well that a detective was at his heels somewhere in that crowd.

Harry was wondering where he was going, when he saw the man dart into a corner saloon and disappear.

A scornful smile flashed over the boy's face for a moment and he muttered:

"That's too old a dodge to work on me."

Instead of lurking about the front door, the boy dashed around the corner and hid himself in a nearby doorway.

He knew very well what Mr. Briggs was going to do.

There was a side door to the saloon, and he kept it under surveillance.

"It will be mighty queer if he don't come out this way," he muttered. "He knows he's shadowed by somebody and wants to throw his pursuer off his trail. He's got a tough contract on his hands now. He won't shake me so easily as he expects to. I'm dead on to his curves."

The boy's judgment was correct.

He had not long to wait. Mr. Briggs soon stuck his head out the side door of the saloon, and surveyed the side street.

Few people were passing there.

He cautiously emerged.

Near by was a row of tenements.

Crossing the street he darted into one of the hallways.

Once more he vanished.

Harry did not budge from his hiding place.

Peering around an iron column, he had a good view of the doorway where the man had vanished. Several times he caught a dim view of the faint outlines of a man's figure in the gloomy hallway.

He knew Briggs was lurking there.

Finally the figure vanished completely.

Not until then did Harry leave his place of concealment.

Going over on the corner he surveyed the tenements intently, and studied out the plan of the adjoining buildings.

The row extended to the corner.

Down the side street, at a distance of one hundred feet, was another tenement under which there was a junk dealer's store.

The boy saw that the rear of the row he was watching extended back to the building on the side street.

He was satisfied now that Mr. Briggs' plan was to go to the roof of the house he entered, cross over to the roof of the house that abutted the rear on the side street, and thence make his way to the ground.

He thus hoped to shake off any possible pursuers. Of this Harry was fully convinced. He felt sure the man's business did not call him into those tenements.

He therefore kept the exit from the side street house in plain view, and waited.

Nearly half an hour passed by, Harry standing inside the saloon.

Then Briggs showed himself, and the boy, peering through the window, saw him.

Just as Harry suspected, he cautiously advanced from the doorway of the tenement in the side street, and cast a searching glance around.

The boy had made no error in his calculations.

Not a soul was on the side street, and, apparently satisfied that he had given a pursuer the slip, Briggs hastened down the street and shot around a corner.

Harry did not follow him at once. He knew better than to do that.

Briggs, he noticed, merely turned the corner, and, standing close to the building there, kept peering around the edge of the house to see if anyone followed him.

He was soon satisfied that he was free from observation.

He then returned to the side street from which he had dodged, and walked straight down to Battery Park, never looking back once.

The young detective had made another change in his appearance.

He now wore a big brown mustache, his suit of jeans was turned inside out, the blouse being tucked in his waistband, giving him the look of a laborer.

The blouse looked like a navy blue shirt, the overalls were dark brown, and he had an old felt hat on his head, without a band around it.

Briggs crossed the park toward the sea wall.

On one of the benches sat a young woman, and he went straight toward her.

Harry quickened his pace and overtook the man.

He gauged his walk just right to be close behind Briggs when he reached the girl.

At one glance the boy now saw that she was the same person who had been riding in the express wagon that carried Laroque's black trunk from the steamer to the sailors' boarding house in Greenwich street.

It startled the boy.

"Queer he's meeting her!" he commented. "Briggs said he was a stranger in New York and didn't know a soul here. It looks as if he was lying to us."

The young woman sprang to her feet upon seeing him.

"Oh, I'm so glad you have come!" she cried impulsively.

"My dear little wife!" exclaimed Briggs in tender tones.

The next moment he clasped her in his arms, kissed her and they embraced.

Harry heard what they said, but had to pass on.

"So!" he thought. "She's his wife!"

Briggs glanced carelessly at the receding figure of Harry, and they sat down on the bench.

The boy followed a curve in the path, and once out of their sight, he darted over the grass and swiftly made his way up behind them.

With their backs turned toward him, they failed to see him.

Like a shadow, Harry crept up close behind the pair, and without attracting their attention he lay on the grass almost under the bench.

"I was so anxious to speak to you when the steamer landed," Mrs. Briggs was saying. "In fact, it was because I wanted to see you, after our long separation, that I rode down to the steamer with Nick Ripley, on the express wagon."

"You shouldn't have done that, Clara," said Mr. Briggs. "Before I went to Paris I told you not to come down to meet me. I didn't want anyone to know I knew anybody here."

"But I couldn't help it, Peter," she pleaded. "I had to see you, even if I didn't speak to you."

"It was very unwise, my dear. However, as nothing ill came of it, I won't scold you any more. Have you got the key to the black trunk which I sent you from Paris?"

"The one you got from Laroque in France?"

"Yes."

"I had it, but I gave it to Ripley. He was going to open the trunk with it when the detectives raided the sailors' boarding house. When we fled over the roofs Nick left the key in the trunk. So we didn't get the jewelry."

"I see."

"And, Peter, did you see what the papers said to-night?"

"You mean about finding Laroque's body in the trunk, don't you?"

"I do. Wasn't it awful?"

"Yes, indeed. A fearful mystery."

"Who could have killed the jeweler and put his body in the trunk?"

"I'm sure I haven't the least idea. It's a pity the detectives found it, though. We might have quietly buried it in the cellar of the boarding house, and no one would have known anything about the murder. You see, that crime has exposed Laroque's smuggling business, and the police will think we killed him to steal his jewels."

"Wasn't the smuggled jewelry in the false bottom of the trunk?" she asked, in surprise.

"No. It was taken out probably by the party who killed Laroque."

"What a pity!" she exclaimed. "Then your men will not get a share in the sale of the gems!"

Young King Brady was startled to hear this remark.

CHAPTER VII.

A FIGHT.

Harry Brady was learning some very valuable points about the strange case he was working on.

In the first place, it was evident that Laroque, Briggs, the woman, Ripley and the gang of men at the sailors' boarding house, were a gang of smugglers.

Briggs had evidently been helping the jeweler in Paris and had sent one of the trunk keys on ahead to his wife by mail.

The gang evidently had been designing to smuggle that large lot of jewels and jewelry into the United States and share the profits of the sales.

None of them seemed to have known that the jewels were stolen on the steamer nor that Laroque had been murdered and put in the trunk, until Old King Brady exposed the fearful crime.

In fact, Briggs himself, while admitting he was the leader of this gang of smugglers, repudiated all knowledge of the murder.

The Bradys could now convict him easily enough of being a smuggler, but they had no evidence to fasten the assassination of Laroque upon him.

It would have been the rankest folly to arrest Briggs then.

A waiting game would pay better.

It might lead to the solving of the greater mystery—namely:

Who killed Laroque?

This was the main point to be found out.

Harry turned these matters over in his mind and then heard Briggs ask:

"What has become of the boys?"

"They are all hiding," replied the woman.

"Where?"

"Down at the beach."

"The detective's raid scared them off, eh?"

"Badly. They want to see you as soon as possible."

"So they shall. Let them know I'll join them to-morrow night at nine o'clock."

"Very well, Peter."

"Have they got any business on hand?"

"Yes. That Pearl street tobacco importer expects some cigars."

"By what steamer?"

"The Seneca. She is due in two days."

"Who is bringing them?"

"We don't know. Probably the purser. Anyway, they are to be thrown overboard off Sandy Hook lightship, in rubber bags. We've got to pick up the bags, tow them ashore and deliver them to the importer. The bags are inflated, to make them float."

"I see. There's good money in that for us, I suppose."

"Yes. But I wish you were out of this business. It's too dangerous. Some day you may get shot. You don't know what moment you may get arrested."

"Bosh! There's big money in this game. I like the danger. Besides, you know I've sworn to become a rich man. I won't give up till I've got half a million. You needn't worry. You've got nothing to fear in your cosy little home——"

"I know I'm safe enough," she replied, "but I fear for

your safety. Peter, I have nothing to do with your business except to give information. But I don't like it at all. I wouldn't have anything to do with such work if it wasn't for you compelling me to aid you."

"There, now; don't get off on one of your moral streaks again, Clara. You know how I love money. You are aware of my burning ambition to get rich and you ought to do everything in your power to aid me."

"How much longer do you intend to keep up this wretched work?"

"Not long. In one more year I'll retire."

Harry smiled softly and thought:

"You'll retire long before that if I have my way about it."

At this moment the smuggler's wife rose to her feet, saying:

"I'm going home, now, Peter. Will you come with me?"

"No, I dare not. I'm being watched."

"I hope you are in no danger."

"None whatever, if you let me follow my own plans."

"Very well," she replied, "I——"

But just then Briggs suddenly interrupted her.

In rising he had caught a glimpse of Harry's body.

A smothered cry of rage burst from his lips. He rushed around the bench. Before the boy realized what happened the man pounced upon him.

"An eavesdropper!" he hissed.

The change in his looks was startling.

Instead of the kindly expression he usually wore, there was a demoniacal glare in his eyes and his features were convulsed with fury.

His wife recoiled, with a look of alarm upon her pretty face.

"Good heavens! We are betrayed!" she groaned, in tones of anguish.

The man caught Harry by the arm and jerked him upon his feet, roaring savagely:

"Get up out of there. Blast you, what do you mean by sneaking around here listening to my conversation?"

"Le' me go!" gasped the boy in dull, thick tones. "Can't a poor devil take a sleep on the grass if he wants ter? You'se fly coppers is allers kickin' us aroun' like dogs. I ain't got no money fer lodgin's, I ain't. Le' me go, I tell yer!"

And so saying he began to struggle.

Briggs was a very powerful man and easily held him.

"Keep still!" he hissed.

"Wha' d'yer want?" sulkily asked the boy.

"I want to know who you are?"

"Gosh amighty, I didn't do nuthin', did I?"

"Ain't you ringing in with the police?"

"Naw! Are you crazy?"

"Weren't you listening to my talk?"

"What talk?"

"The conversation I had with my wife."

"Aw—what in blazes do I keer for what you says to yer wife? Le' go o' my arm."

He had his hand roughly bandaged.

Briggs glared at the miserable-looking object before him again with the keenest suspicion in his eyes, but he failed to see what he first feared. This was simply a disguised detective. Harry's fine acting deceived him. He began to think that after all the boy was some poor, homeless wretch who had fallen asleep on the grass behind the bench. It made him curse his carelessness in not looking about for the sake of security, before he engaged his wife in conversation.

The rascal did not even trust his own judgment, though.

He suddenly picked Harry up in his arms,

"I don't know who you are, what you are or how much you heard," he hissed, "but I'll make sure you won't trouble me again."

And so saying he rushed over to the sea wall with the boy.

Raising Harry up, he hurled him toward the dark waters that splashed against the slimy stones below, but the boy did not go two inches.

He had grabbed Briggs by the hair with both hands.

"No yer won't!" he roared.

As his body fell it struck against the man and knocked him down.

Harry clung to the man and landed on top of him.

Aching all over, mad with rage and fearing trouble, Briggs fairly yelled:

"Let me go! Away with you! Confound you! Stop, I say! Let me up!"

"Help! Help!" yelled Harry, at the top of his voice.

"Shut up, you fool!"

"Police! Murder!" screamed the boy.

"My God, he'll get me in a nice fix!" groaned Briggs.

He tore his hair free by sheer strength, bounded to his feet and rushed away.

"Go, Clara—go home!" he panted.

Then he rushed down one of the paths at full speed.

His wife departed in the opposite direction.

Some people having heard Harry's cries rushed toward him just as he got upon his feet and a moment later he was surrounded.

"What's the matter?" demanded a man.

"Oh, nuthin' much," growled the boy. "D'yer see that big guy runnin' away? Well, me an' him had a scrap. I got the best o' him and he's took ter runnin'."

"Is that all?" was the disappointed reply.

"Gosh blame it, ain't that enough? Kin yer blame me fer yellin' when I tort he was a-goin' ter eat me? Well, now, not much, ole man—see! I'm a-goin' ter chase de bloke, an' break his nut!"

And with this pretext to escape the crowd, he ran away.

Harry saw Briggs jump on a Broadway car and the boy ran after it.

In this manner he traced the man back to the Astor House and saw him make tracks for his bedroom, into which he hurried and disappeared.

The young detective regretted that he could not follow

Mrs. Briggs, for he was anxious to discover where she lived.

However, it was useless to hope for too much.

He felt that he had done a great deal, as it was, and, therefore, had to content himself.

The boy had seen the wicked side of Briggs' disposition. It showed him that the man was a veritable demon once his passion was aroused.

"You can't judge a person by appearances," he thought. "He's a bad egg."

As he did not wish to spend the night watching Briggs' door, he telephoned to police headquarters for a spotter and placed him on duty there.

He then went home and met Old King Brady.

During supper he told the old detective all that happened.

"You have done remarkably well," said the veteran, patting his pupil on the back.

"It wouldn't do to arrest Briggs, would it?" asked Harry.

"No, not yet. We must watch him. He will lead us to his gang. We can then get the whole crowd. If we arrest him they'll hear of it mighty quick and take fright. That will be the last we'll ever see of them."

"If he was guilty of killing Laroque wouldn't he have admitted it to his wife?"

"No. I think not. She has no sympathy with his smuggling games. She would have less with such a crime as murder. He is very shrewd. He wouldn't give himself away to any one if he killed the jeweler."

"What a liar I proved him to be."

"Yes. He's a dandy. He's got an awfully innocent face. It would deceive any one. Now I wonder what beach those villains are hiding at?"

"The woman failed to say. We can easily track him there, though. And when he and the gang are smuggling in the cigars I told you about, we can grab them. We'll have them corraled with evidence of guilt in their possession."

"Right you are."

"Then we'll have to find Laroque's assassin."

"It's going to be a tough job working our silent clue."

He pointed at a small bottle filled with alcohol, in which the severed finger floated, standing upon the mantelpiece. Harry glanced at it and frowned.

"That finger must have been cut from the hand of an accomplice of Briggs," said the boy, "for I feel certain he was mixed up in that murder, despite the alibi he tried to prove. An interview with the steward will tell the tale. Briggs has proven himself such a notorious liar, though, he may have trumped up that evidence, to clear himself of suspicion."

Old King Brady nodded assent to this view of the case.

"Surmises are useless," he exclaimed. "We can only deduct from facts, if we wish to succeed. I'm going to hunt for that steward and get his version of the case. We may then have something tangible to work on."

CHAPTER VIII.

WORKING THE SILENT CLEW.

As Peter Briggs had said it would be 9 o'clock on the following night before he would join his gang at the seashore, the Bradys did not trouble him.

The spotter next day reported over the telephone that the man was remaining quietly at the hotel, only leaving his room to go to his meals.

"He means to keep up the part he is playing," said Old King Brady the next morning. "He expects us back. He knows very well he is being watched all the time. It is going to make his task of getting away from the hotel a hard one, when he starts off to join his gang."

"But he may have a great deal of self-confidence," laughed Harry. The rascal thought last night that he fooled a spotter and threw him off his track, when he went to meet his wife. He may imagine he can do the same thing again."

"Perhaps," was the laconic reply. "He's a subtle rascal, Harry."

"You fear he may be too smart for us, don't you?"

"Well, yes. I wouldn't trust him further than I could see him."

"Nor I. Yet he didn't beat me."

"He might, the next trip."

"What are you going to do?"

"Find out from the hospitals if they've had a patient whose finger was cut off."

"That ain't a bad plan."

"You, in the meantime, had better see the chief. Tell him we want a revenue tug about the time the Seneca is reported off the Highlands. We must go down to meet her, and secure those cigars they intend to smuggle in."

"It won't do to let the crew of the incoming steamer see the tug, or they'll suspect our plan, and fail to throw the cigars overboard."

"We don't have to. We'll want the tug to speed out on the water after the smugglers. We must get the cigars while they are in the hands of Briggs' gang. That will suffice to convict them on the smuggling charge, you know."

"Very well."

"Meet me at the Astor House at 7:30 to-night."

Harry nodded and they went out, and separated.

Old King Brady had the bottled finger in his pocket.

He made a round of the hospitals in a cab, and finally learned that a man with an injured hand had been treated at Bellevue.

The physician who attended the patient was summoned to the office.

"What do you wish to know?" he asked the detective.

"You had a patient yesterday with a wounded hand?"

"I did. He lost the little finger from his left hand."

"What was his name?"

"Called himself John Jones."

"Describe him as accurately as you can."

"He was a large, stylishly dressed man of forty, with black eyes, dark, curly hair, a short, bristly black beard, and a large Roman nose. He had heavy eyebrows and square jaws."

"To what did he ascribe his injury?"

"Said he was sharpening a razor and sliced off the finger."

"Did it look like a razor cut?"

"Oh, yes. Only a razor would make such a clean gash."

"Was his wound dangerous?"

"Not unless complications set in."

"And you doctored it?"

"Yes. I applied the usual remedies and told him to call again in three days to have the bandages removed, and fresh medicine applied."

"Then you expect him here to-morrow?"

"I do. He promised to call at 3 o'clock."

"Did he state where he lived?"

"Yes. He gave the Grand Union Hotel as his residence."

"Was there anything peculiar about his walk, speech or actions?"

"Not a thing. The only impression of his character I gained was that he had a violent temper. He was cool and courageous, though, when under the pain of treatment. Indeed, I could not help admiring his fortitude."

Old King Brady drew the bottle containing the severed finger from his pocket.

Handing it to the physician, he asked:

"Does it seem to you that this is the finger cut from that man's hand?"

The doctor carefully examined it.

When he finished, he handed it back and said in tones of conviction:

"Yes. I'd swear to it. The cut was such a peculiar one that no matter when the wound heals up, you'll be able to fit this finger back in its place. I'm sorry he didn't have the finger with him. I might have grafted it back. It would have been a fine experiment. If you will leave this member with me, I'll——"

"I can't," interrupted Old King Brady.

"Why not?"

"That man is a murderer."

"Heavens!"

"This finger is the only clew to his identity."

"Ah! I see."

"I am a detective in search of him."

"Now I understand."

"I'll be here to-morrow at 3 to arrest him."

"All right, sir."

"Now, don't you let on what you know about this."

"Of course not. On the contrary, I'll help you all I can."

"Thank you, doctor. Good day."

And Old King Brady was gone.

He made a bee line for the Grand Union Hotel.

Inquiry of the clerk disclosed the fact that John Jones

was a guest there, wounded hand and all, and the clerk sent the detective to the man's room with a hall boy.

The key was in the lock inside.

Receiving no response to a knock and observing the door key, the boy entered.

Mr. John Jones was not in.

There was an open valise on the floor, and an open telegram on the bureau.

Old King Brady took the liberty of reading the message, and saw that it said:

"MR. JONES:—Get under cover right away. The police are on the hunt.
BILL BROWN."

The detective eagerly pocketed the message.

It contained a tell-tale clew.

This consisted of the name of the place from which the message was sent.

That name was the Astor House, where Mr. Briggs was stopping.

The message had arrived about an hour previously.

And Mr. John Jones had gone under cover!

"Well, I'm blest if this isn't the worst dump I ever got," mused Old King Brady, in disgust. "Missed him by an hour. He's safely hidden now, no doubt. It shows pretty plainly that he and Briggs are in league, for Briggs, no doubt, was the individual who signs himself 'Bill Brown.' That shows there were two men in the murder case. Briggs knows all about the murder, else he wouldn't send this dispatch to warn the injured man. The villain lied to us. His alibi is no good. He trumped it up. I won't bother looking for the steward of the *Normandie*. Even if I found him it wouldn't do me any good. He'd say that Briggs lied. Now, who can this John Jones be—one of the passengers, or one of the crew of the steamer? How can I find out?"

He took a chew of plug, and began thinking.

Then he examined the contents of the valise.

It was a new one, and a very large one.

There was a large quantity of clothing in it, and Old King Brady examined it.

Another interesting fact was now brought to light.

This clothing was all very small of size and certainly could not fit a man of the great size Mr. John Jones was said to possess.

An idea then dawned on Old King Brady's mind.

"It's Laroque's clothing!"

He was led to this belief because Tom Wren had written from Paris to the chief that the jeweler had put his clothing in the trunk on top of the false bottom.

In order to put Laroque's body in the black trunk, the murderer had to remove the dead man's clothing from it.

As it would not do to leave the clothing on the steamer, the assassin had doubtless packed it in his valise and carried it ashore to dispose of it.

In his hurried flight after receiving the warning telegram, he had no time to get rid of the tell-tale clothing and so had left it behind him.

Old King Brady gathered it up into the valise and took it.

"I'll take this," he remarked.

"But it's Mr. Jones'," remonstrated the hall boy.

"Oh, no, it isn't. It's mine now."

"You'll have to explain that to the clerk, sir."

"Certainly I shall."

He had seen the name of the tailor who made the garments inside the coats, and expected it would prove to be a valuable clew to learn for whom this clothing had been made.

Old King Brady carefully searched the room in quest of other clews, but found nothing of any interest.

He then went downstairs thinking:

"It's doubtful if this fellow will show up at the hospital to-morrow."

At the office he proved his identity, told his story and took the valise.

"I'm sorry you couldn't keep this stuff to indemnify you for your loss of board bill by the flight of that scoundrel," he said.

"Well, it won't be the first time we've been cheated," laughed the clerk.

Old King Brady proceeded straight to the tailor whose name was marked in the garments, and quickly learned that they belonged to Jean Laroque.

He then brought them to his lodging house, where he left them.

His next move was to the Astor House.

At the telegraph office he learned that the person who sent the message was a man of Briggs' exact description.

That was the second identification.

He was very well pleased with the progress they had made thus far, and went out to the main entrance to look for Harry, as it was then 7:30.

The gloom of night had fallen.

He met Young King Brady talking to the spotter, and greeted them with:

"What news?"

"Briggs sent a telegram at 2:30, sir," answered the spotter.

"To John Jones, Grand Union Hotel?"

"Yes, so I learned from the operator. He wouldn't divulge the contents, though."

"Oh, never mind about that. I've got the dispatch. Where is he?"

"In his room."

"Very well. You may go now."

The spotter went away, and Harry said:

"I've seen the chief, and carried out your instructions."

"Good. I'll tell you what I've been doing."

He then explained to Harry all that is known to the reader.

When he concluded, he said:

"I'm going up to his room now to confront him with the evidence of his acquaintance with the man who lost his finger."

They ascended the stairs and knocked at Briggs' door.

They got no reply.

As the door was not locked, they passed inside.

The bird had flown.

An open back window showed how he made his escape.

CHAPTER IX.

OFF FOR THE OCEAN.

"Thunder! He's gone, Harry!"

"Escaped out the back window."

"This is awkward."

"Let's see how he got away."

Rushing to the open window, they peered out. A fire-escape met their view. It led to a rear alley which opened on Vesey street.

Evidently he had gone down the fire-escape ladder to the alley. While the detectives were watching at the front of the hotel, he was making his escape out the back way. Old King Brady's distrust was well founded.

The detectives stepped back into the room with a crest-fallen air.

Gazing into each other's eyes a moment, they looked thoroughly disgusted.

"What careless fools we were!" said Harry bitterly.

"How long ago was he in here?"

"I heard him moving about the room an hour ago."

"He's too far off now to block him at the ferries."

"No doubt of it."

"He's on his way to the seashore by this time, to meet his pals."

"It's a pity I couldn't locate that particular beach."

"Yes. We can't go beach-hunting for them to-night. We might go from Maine to Florida. There's quite a lot of beach along the coast of this country."

"What do you suggest?" asked Harry blankly.

"Nothing. We can't do a thing. We are crippled. It's hard luck, but we have let two very valuable birds slip through our fingers to-day."

"What has he left behind?"

"Nothing but a trunk and valise containing his clothing."

"Then let's get out of here."

Leaving the hotel, they went home.

On the following morning after breakfast, Old King Brady asked Harry:

"Have you heard anything yet from the pawnbrokers and jewelers regarding the smuggled jewelry being offered for sale or pledge?"

"Not a word."

"It's my opinion the thief will not offer it till this fuss blows over."

"More than likely. They're a very foxy gang. What's the plan for to-day?"

"We'll see if John Jones returns to the hospital for treat-

ment. But we must not let the steamer Seneca get into port before we go out to meet her."

"In that case I'd better go down to the Battery and board the tug Lizzie. She is waiting near the Barge Office to take us off at a moment's notice. In case you are detained, I can show the revenue officer the way to get those cigars. And if incidentally we can get the smugglers into our clutches, we'll nab them."

"That's the safest plan," declared Old King Brady. "It will be fully five o'clock before I can join you, as the patient isn't due at Bellevue until three. We can't afford to run any chances with those slippery smugglers, Harry. As Mr. Briggs found you listening to his conversation with his wife, he will be on the alert for danger. He may suspect you overheard their design and will give them away. It's safe to predict that if we meet those fellows on the water they will be prepared for a battle."

Soon afterward they went out.

Harry proceeded to make his arrangements complete about the revenue boat and Old King Brady spent his time hunting for clues.

First he visited the French steamer.

She had discharged her cargo and was taking on freight.

As she was going to sail for Havre in a few days he wanted to get all the information he could before her departure.

The old detective spent several hours aboard the steamer.

In that time he learned that all the crew was aboard and saw them all from the captain to the stokers.

That not one of them was Peter Briggs' accomplice was certain.

As the steward was missing he of course had no chance to interview that individual, at that time.

The passengers were all gone, of course.

"Every one of them was above suspicion, though."

There were eighteen men in the whole list, and as the women were out of the question of complicity the detective located the men.

He found they were all New Yorkers and called on them with a plausible excuse for so doing.

Not one of the lot had an injured hand.

This fact forced a certain conclusion upon the detective's mind, which was that Briggs' accomplice was either a man who had come aboard down the bay at Quarantine, or that he was a stowaway.

The detective had the case reduced now to a fine point.

The only probability about it was that the steward might be the guilty man.

He could not verify this idea though, as Marsh was missing.

Old King Brady then went to the Grand Union Hotel.

Here he questioned everybody who was likely to give him a clue about the mysterious John Jones. He met with nothing of value except this:

That John Jones reached the hotel on the day the Normandie landed, about the time it would have taken to get there from the French dock.

Registering and leaving his valise in his room, he went out.

Some time later he returned with new bandages on his injured hand.

In the interval he had, no doubt, been to the hospital.

A few minutes after receiving the telegram he was seen to hurriedly leave the hotel, going in the direction of the Grand Central depot.

That was the last they saw of him.

At two o'clock Old King Brady started for the hospital.

There he met the doctor who had taken care of John Jones.

"He hasn't come yet," said the young physician.

"I'll wait," replied the detective.

"I meant to have asked you a question when you were here last time, sir."

"What was it?"

"Supposing the man comes here during your absence?"

"If he does, attend to his hand, and hold him on that pretext until you can notify the police and have him put under arrest."

"Well, if he does arrive when you ain't here I'll do that."

A patient called the doctor away.

Old King Brady kept watching the clock expectantly.

It soon struck three.

But the mysterious Jones failed to appear.

An hour passed by and still no Jones.

When five o'clock came Old King Brady gave him up.

"He won't be here now, that's pretty certain," he cogitated.

Then he procured the telephone and called up the various hospitals, asking:

"Has a man been in for treatment, whose left hand little finger was cut off?"

Every one answered "No."

That settled the matter.

"He's hiding," said the detective to the physician who came back. "I suppose he's under the care of a private doctor and won't call here again."

"If he does, I'll have him popped into jail."

Old King Brady had to be satisfied with this assurance.

Leaving the hospital he rode to the Barge Office.

The tug was there, waiting for him, and Harry met him on the deck.

"Steamer reported yet?" queried Old King Brady anxiously.

"No," replied the boy. "She can't get up to-night even if she does come over the bar. They'll hold her off St. George till morning."

"Then we've got plenty of time."

"Oceans of it."

"It's going to be a dark night, Harry."

"Don't you think we'd better run down to the Hook?"

"By all means. We can beat about outside for awhile and if it gets too rough, we can easily run up the Narrows to Owl's Head and wait. It's better to be ahead of time to forestall those smugglers. Should the storm break, they

won't be likely to consign the rubber bags to the sea. They will be more likely to hold them till they reach smooth water in the lower bay and drop the bags before the boarding officer appears."

There was a blue striped flag at the pole and Harry noticed it.

It was the emblem of the Custom House.

As one of the deckhands came from the engine room, the boy pointed up at the flag, and said:

"Haul down that rag."

"What for?" demanded the man in surprise.

"Because we don't want our identity known. I never saw such stupidity before. You must recollect this is a secret mission. That flag would advertise our business to the very ones we wish to keep it from."

"Sure enough," said the man.

And down came the flag.

Harry then cried to the captain in the pilot house:

"You can leave at any moment."

"See if the whole squad of inspectors are aboard."

Harry glanced into the dimly-lit cabin aft.

Eight uniformed officers were crowded into the stuffy little place, smoking and playing cards to pass away the time.

"All ready to go now!" said the boy.

"Need us, sir?" asked an officer.

"Oh, no. Not yet. All armed?"

"Rifles and revolvers according to your orders."

"That's right. We are going down to the Hook."

Closing the door, he stepped back on the narrow deck.

The crew were casting off the hawsers and the propeller revolved.

The Lizzie was a very fast tug.

She spun around on her keel and went puffing down the murky river with a very important air.

A solitary peak light swung from her flag halyard.

Old King Brady now had a chance to tell Harry all he had done that day and when he finished, the boy said:

"You've got the case drawn down fine now. You've reduced it to this:

"Briggs and Jones killed Laroque. One of the two must have done it. The missing jewels are in their possession. Probably they are hidden somewhere. It's a question who Jones is. Our silent clew will identify him sooner or later. Then we'll be able to fasten the crime on the right party."

They then went up in the pilot house and joined the captain.

He was a stout man in blue uniform and knew all the channels well.

The tug shot across the dark bay, and passed Staten Island with its myriad of twinkling lights, then forged out on the dark ocean.

It was pretty rough outside.

A heavy choppy sea made the sturdy little tug dance unpleasantly and would have made the detectives sick had they not been good sailors.

Far in the distance loomed the twin lights on the old lightship, and the tug shaped her course toward them.

In a short time they were far from land and were bending their eager glances about in quest of the ship containing the contraband cigars.

CHAPTER X.

TEN BAGS OF CIGARS.

No moon or stars shone in the dark, cloudy sky. Everything was dark. A sharp cutting wind was blowing. The swish of the foam and lapping of the waves mingled with the churning of the propeller as the swell threw up the stern of the tug.

Old King Brady broke the silence by asking the captain:

"Have you got to keep that peak light burning?"

"Yes. It may prevent a collision."

"But it will show our enemies where we are."

"Then I'll have the lantern taken in."

He called to one of the deckhands and the light came down.

That made the two Bradys feel easier. They didn't want their enemies to know they were on the watch for them.

Harry peered down at the deck, in the bow, and asked:

"Who's that standing there?"

"The man at the calcium light," returned the captain.

"What orders did you give him?"

"Not to turn on the searchlight till you told him to."

"That's right."

An interval of silence ensued.

The tug finally arrived near the lightship.

Here she beat about for several hours, when the lookout cried:

"There's a light dead ahead, sir"

"Ah, yes," replied the captain, peering out. "I see it."

"What do you make it out to be," asked Harry.

"A steamer's light. See how high up from the water it stands, and—yes, see there—she's turning. Now you can see the port lights plainly."

Far off in the gloom was a dim string of lights moving along.

They were forging toward the tugboat rapidly. Then there sounded the deep, dull blast of a steam siren.

"That's a steamer, sure enough," said the tugboat captain.

"I'll bet that blast was a signal," Old King Brady replied shrewdly.

"Perhaps. We'll go off on the port tack or she'll run us down."

The wheel spun around, and the Lizzie glided away from the course of the oncoming vessel, going toward the Long Island shore.

Harry kept watching the oncoming lights. His partner was more a tute. He kept watching for evidence of the mugglers, for he had no doubt that the vessel was the Seneca.

He felt that they were bound to make their presence known.

Nor was he mistaken.

A rocket suddenly shot up in the air.

It was discharged in the direction of Rockaway.

"Ha! I thought so!" exclaimed the old detective, triumphantly.

"What is it?" eagerly asked Harry, facing him.

"A shore signal."

"I see it now."

"Those fellows will soon be out here to head off the steamer."

"Rowboats would get swamped in this kind of a sea."

"Oh, they'll have a larger and safer sort of craft, you can depend."

"Yes, and here she comes."

He pointed at a tiny, moving point of light glimmering in the distance. It was evidently upon a swift moving craft of some kind, hidden in the gloom.

On it came steadily.

Each moment the light grew bigger.

It was soon apparent to the silent watchers that the vessel that put out from the coast was going to cross the course of the steamer.

Their suspicions were soon confirmed, that she was signaling.

A dull blue flame rose from the vessel.

The blue fire only burned for a moment, then was extinguished.

No sooner had the gloom swallowed it, when an answering signal of the same kind showed for a moment upon the steamer.

Once more the gloom settled down.

"Harry!"

"Well, Old King Brady."

"Arm the inspectors and get them ready."

"Very well. We'll remain on the lower deck."

The boy hastened down the ladder. Just then the tug swung off on another course. It would bring her astern of the smaller vessel.

In ten minutes more they were near the steamship, and they saw the craft that put out from shore as it passed between them and the Seneca.

It was only a momentary view. But they beheld her outlines. She was to all appearances a naphtha launch. Another scene met their view in the light emitted from the steamship's deck lanterns.

A uniformed man stood in the stern gangway above the propeller.

He was busily employed heaving a number of bulky objects overboard.

The detectives realized at once that they were the inflated rubber bags filled with fine cigars, that the smugglers designed to carry ashore.

The crew of the naphtha launch had no trouble to locate where they floated, as the man on the steamer had taken great care to fasten a lighted lantern to one.

On went the steamer and she vanished.

Down on the water floated the burning lantern secured to a rubber sack.

All around nine similar bags were bobbing up and down upon the waves. The launch was heading for them.

Pretty soon the launch reached them, and paused.

Keenly watched by the men on the Lizzie, the smugglers brought several lights on deck which plainly revealed their actions.

Old King Brady joined Harry.

He had all the armed inspectors on deck.

"Do you recognize them?" asked the old detective.

"I can easily see Briggs," the boy replied. "He's directing them."

"Just so. They are tying the bags together with short ropes."

"What's that for?"

"To tow them, of course. They can't easily pick them up out of this rough water."

"Shall I throw the light upon them?"

"Wait a few moments. Let them get everything ready for towing the bags. It may save us a heap of trouble afterward, when we seize them."

Harry laughed quietly.

The tug hovered around for a quarter of an hour.

At the end of that time the smugglers had apparently prepared the bags to their entire satisfaction for the starting gong sounded.

Just as the launch forged ahead, Old King Brady cried:

"Let her go, Harry!"

The boy passed the order to the man at the calcium light and he turned it on.

A powerful reflector sent a broad shaft of light gushing over the sea.

It struck fairly upon the moving launch, and they heard a wild yell of alarm.

The glaring, brilliant sheen revealed a small dark launch on which there were eight or ten men. It was easy for the detectives to recognize most of them then.

They were the same ruffians they had met in the Greenwich street sailors' boarding house, in possession of the mysterious black trunk.

"It's Briggs and his gang, sure enough," said Harry.

"By thunder, we've startled them," laughed Old King Brady.

"Lay your course!" called the captain from the pilot house.

"Run right up to them!" replied the old detective.

"Ay now! Look sharp there for trouble."

"We are ready."

"Going to board them?"

"Yes—if possible."

"Then I'll lay to alongside of her."

The tug dashed toward the launch.

Old King Brady now yelled:

"Launch ahoy!"

"Ahoy!" came a sullen response in Briggs' voice.

"Haul to, there!"

"What for?"

"I want to board your boat."

"You'll do nothing of the kind."

"Then we'll fire on you!"

"Fire, and be blowed!" was the defiant answer.

The launch darted ahead faster, and they heard Briggs shout:

"Cut those bags adrift! It's a drag on us."

"Ay, ay, sir!" responded his men.

The blows of a hatchet severing the tow line was heard.

"Put out every light!" was Briggs' next order.

"Who are they?" asked a hoarse voice.

"Revenue officers."

A volley of curses arose from the gang, and out went the lights. The rattling of the rudder lines in the blocks was heard. But that fierce inexorable searchlight followed every move they made.

"They are going to run for liberty," said Harry, hurriedly.

"We'll overhaul them as long as we can keep the light on their boat," the old detective replied. "We ought to get those bags of cigars."

"We can pick them up. The lantern is on them yet."

"Captain—do you hear what I say?"

"Ay, but they'll retard our speed in a chase if we tow those bags."

"I don't intend to tow them. We'll pull 'em up on deck."

Just as the boat swung around, there came a sudden and fearful crash of firearms from the deck of the launch.

The volley was centred on the searchlight.

With a jingling and grating noise the reflector was smashed.

Out went the light.

Dense gloom settled like a pall upon the sea.

There was a cry of exultation from the smugglers. They had crippled the detectives' party. That was their only chance to steal away under cover of the darkness. It now seemed as if they had saved themselves.

"Confound them!" roared Harry. "Fire back!"

Bang! Bang! went a volley from the rifles in the hands of the revenue inspectors, and cries of pain came from the launch.

"We've hit 'em!" said an officer.

"Fire again."

"Can't see 'em, sir."

"Shoot anyhow—quick!"

Another volley roared over the water, but brought no response. It made the detectives imagine the smugglers had dodged out of range in the gloom.

"Captain!" cried Old King Brady.

"Ay, sir."

"Come about till we pick up those bags."

The tug changed her course and ran over to the floating lantern.

It was a hard job to pull the big, heavy rubber bags up on deck from the water, but they finally succeeded.

There were thousands of cigars in that haul.

"Now—chase those villains," cried Old King Brady.

"Easier said than done," growled the captain. "I'll try at random for them, though."

CHAPTER XI.

ARREST OF SOME SMUGGLERS.

Thinking the smugglers' boat had gone back toward the coast, where the lights were twinkling, the captain sent the tug in that direction.

Harry had been examining the shattered searchlight with a lantern. He saw that it was badly damaged. In fact, it was injured beyond repair.

The man who had been attending it was badly frightened by the shots.

"They came mighty near killing me," he grumbled.

"None of the bullets hit you, though, did they?" asked Harry.

"No, but they buzzed around me like a swarm of bees."

"Those rascals were very clever. They seemed to realize that if they destroyed this light it would give them a good show to escape in the darkness."

"Which shows," said Old King Brady, "that Briggs is a very wise rascal."

"They'll get away for good now."

"Oh, we're bound to run them down yet, Harry."

"I ain't discouraged, but I hate to be baffled so easily."

"You must learn to take defeat. We can't always have everything our own way."

"Well, this case isn't such a soft snap as I thought it would be. With all the evidence we had against that gang I expected to bag them with no trouble."

"The reason we're foiled is because we are stacking up against as clever a crook as ever ran at large to defy us."

Just then the captain sang out:

"Breakers ahead! Which way now, Old King Brady?"

"Toward the port. If they haven't gone in the bay we may as well drop them."

They heard the dull rumble of the surf on the sandy shore, but could not see anything of it. To venture closer would have been dangerous. They might be cast upon the shoals and left stranded.

Luckily the captain knew where Romer's Reef was and as there were numerous ugly spots thereabouts, he headed out to the channel again.

Although it was so dark they could not see far in advance, the captain brought them safely to the forts and up the Narrows.

Once in smooth water all hope of finding the smugglers vanished.

"We may as well reconcile ourselves to the fact that they've given us the slip," said Old King Brady. "It's of no use to try to find them in such a dense darkness without our searchlight."

"These cigars pay us for the trouble," said an inspector.

"You, but not us," growled Old King Brady. "We ex-

pected to nip the whole gang to-night and got left very badly."

"Going to land, sir?" asked the captain.

"By all means," the detective answered.

In due time they reached the Barge Office again and carried the cigars ashore. It was long past three o'clock in the morning. Every one was wet, tired and sleepy. But they examined the contents of the bags before dispersing.

There were 50,000 fine cigars in the haul.

Very much out of humor, the two detectives went home and retired.

Next day they felt better.

After breakfast they went out together, disguised as a pair of longshoremen.

"We must get a job on the Cuban steamship dock," said Old King Brady, explaining his plan for their future work. "That will keep us about the Seneca while she's discharging and receiving freight."

"You suspect that Briggs will come about?" asked Harry.

"He or one of his gang is almost sure to meet their confederate on the steamer and let him know how the cigars were seized."

"In that case we may get a lead on them again."

"I don't know how else we can do so, Harry."

"Well, it's worth a trial, anyway."

"Briggs is a sharp, shrewd man. He isn't going to let this failure phase him. The rascal is full of tricks and plans. See how clearly he thwarted my plan to catch Mr. John Jones at the Grand Union Hotel by sending him a telegram to warn him to hide."

"That shows plainly enough that Briggs is in league with the man who got his finger cut off," said Harry. "Moreover, it shows, too, that Briggs knows all about that murder. If he didn't, why would he try to shield the fellow called Jones? It's my impression that Jones and Briggs tackled Laroque in his cabin. During the fight preceding the assassination Laroque probably cut off Jones' finger, while struggling to protect his life."

"Your theory seems reasonable, Harry."

"I wonder where Jones went?"

"I tried hard to find out, but failed. All I could learn was that he went toward the depot. It may mean that he left New York on a train. He may be hiding somewhere in the country. If he is, we'll have a tough job to find him."

While talking they reached the foot of Wall street.

Finding the stevedore who handled the freight of that line of steamers, they had no trouble to get a job handling cargo.

The Seneca had just arrived at her dock.

In a short time the detectives were in the working gang and were busily employed at taking the cargo from the steamer.

They were thus employed for several days.

In the meantime they kept a keen lookout.

Everybody who came aboard the ship was sharply scruti-

nized by the two officers and they closely watched the officers of the vessel.

By dint of much listening and careful watching, they soon found out that the purser, chief engineer and several of the waiters on the craft were interested in the smuggling scheme they had thwarted.

Harry gleaned these facts one afternoon.

He had gone on deck to remove a hatch cover and stood outside the purser's room, next to the slats covering the window.

Voices came from within the room and he listened.

"It's queer," he heard the purser say. "I haven't heard a word yet as to whether Briggs safely landed those bags or not."

"Nor I, sir," responded the engineer in anxious tones. "I'm worried."

"The cigar importer promised to notify us as soon as he got them."

"Well, he hasn't shown up here yet."

"Do you suppose Briggs met with any trouble?"

"He never did before while working the rubber bag game."

"It would be a mighty bad thing for you, me and the waiters if he failed."

"That's true. We all paid for those cigars. The importer ain't going to repay us till he gets them in his hands, you can bet."

"Do you know where to find Briggs?"

"Yes. He and his men have been living at Bath Beach. There's where they hire the naphtha launch. I heard him say, though, that they are going to leave there as soon as they land the cigars and return to New York."

"Then you can't locate him now?"

"No. By this time he must be in the city."

At this moment one of the waiters came up on deck, followed by a lady.

She was Mrs. Briggs.

Harry felt a thrill of joy when he recognized her.

"She has come to tell her husband's troubles," he thought.

Not wishing to be seen near the purser's stateroom, he went down the hatch ladder and heard Mrs. Briggs enter the purser's cabin with the waiter.

The moment the door closed Harry darted up on deck again.

Going close to the window, he heard the purser say in low tones:

"Well, madam, we've been expecting your husband."

"He sent me here with news for you," she replied, quietly.

"Did he land the cigars?"

"No."

"What!"

"The rubber bags were seized."

"Thunder! By whom?"

"Revenue officers."

"How was that?"

"You recollect throwing the bags overboard?"

"Of course."

"Well a revenue tug was lurking near you at the time."

"Good Lord! Is that so?"

"Yes. The inspectors attacked the launch. To escape arrest, Peter's crew cut the bags adrift and fled."

"That's bad; very, very bad!"

"All the cigars are down at the seizure room."

There was a moment's silence.

Finally the purser said in bitter tones:

"Then we are \$5,000 out of pocket on that deal."

"Do you wish to send any word to my husband?"

"No. Nothing. He'll never work for us again, though."

"Then I'll go."

Harry just had time to dodge out of sight when she stepped from the stateroom and started to leave the steamer.

Old King Brady was on the lower deck and Harry beckoned.

"There goes Briggs' wife. Shadow her!" he whispered, hurriedly, as the old detective joined him. "I'm going to arrest the purser."

In a moment Old King Brady was after the woman.

Harry then strode over to the purser's room, pushed open the door and stepped inside. The purser, engineer and a waiter were in the place.

They glanced at the seeming laborer a moment in surprise, then the purser demanded in savage tones:

"Well, what do you want?"

Harry pulled a pair of handcuffs from his pocket and tossed them on the desk.

Pointing at them, he said, in quiet tones.

"I want you to snap one of those darbies on your left wrist, and I want the engineer to snap the other end of it on his right wrist!"

A startled expression flashed over the faces of the men.

They seemed to realize at once the trouble they were in.

But the engineer tried to brave the matter by asking defiantly:

"What do you mean by saying that?"

Harry showed them his badge.

"Detective," he announced shortly.

"Well?" gasped the engineer in frightened tones.

"We got the cigars from Briggs."

The reckless rascals turned very pale upon hearing this.

"My partner is after Mrs. Briggs now," continued Harry.

"The jig is up!" groaned the purser, dismally.

"Yes," replied Harry. "We've dead evidence against you for smuggling. You'll have to come along. Take my advice and go quietly or there'll be trouble."

"Will money buy you, young fellow?"

"Not on your life. Put on the bracelets, gentlemen."

They were in despair and obeyed him.

The waiter made an effort to sneak away, but Harry grabbed him.

"Hold on, my boy, I want you, too!" he remarked.

The waiter halted, overcome with fright. Then Harry said:

"Now, walk ahead, the three of you, and I'll shoot the first one who tries to escape."

The guilty trio left the room and were taken ashore.

Harry had no trouble to put them in jail.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW OLD KING BRADY WAS FOILED.

While Harry was arresting the men on the Seneca, Old King Brady was in hot pursuit of Mrs Briggs.

She was ignorant of the fact that she was being shadowed, and she proceeded from the steamer and went over to the Third avenue elevated road.

Boarding a train she sat down.

Old King Brady was in the same car.

The woman rode uptown, and alighted at Ninety-ninth street.

She turned down toward the river.

On the other side of the street Old King Brady traced her as far as an old shanty down by the water.

The building was owned and occupied by a man who let out rowboats.

As the detective was close behind the unsuspecting woman, he saw her walk straight through the dingy bar-room and enter a back room.

Secure in his disguise the detective boldly walked into the place.

There was a sun-burned man with a grayish mustache behind the bar, his old felt hat pushed back from his forehead, and a faded suit of ill-fitting clothes covering his thin shambling figure.

He had a clay pipe in his mouth, and was wiping off the bar with a rag.

"Got my beer?" asked Old King Brady.

"We only sell soft drinks here," answered the man gruffly.

"Then open me a bottle of ginger ale," said the detective sitting down at a table close to the door through which Mrs. Briggs passed.

He heard the smothered murmur of voices in the back room.

It was hard to hear all that was said, but he caught a word or two here and there at first from which to deduct the topic of conversation.

"Saw them—" he heard the woman saying.

"— did he say?" came the reply in a man's voice.

"— was wild."

"Anybody follow —"

"— think so. I didn't —"

"— guess it's all right."

A number of men's voices now chimed in.

The boathouse keeper now brought Old King Brady his ginger ale and the noise he made drowned the voices in the next room.

He had heard enough to convince him that Briggs' men

were in the back-room, however. It was evident that the woman was reporting the result of her trip to the Seneca.

Old King Brady wanted to arrest them.

As he knew they were a desperate gang, he dared not attempt it unaided for he knew he could not cope with so many, single handed.

There was nobody near whom he could call upon.

He had no doubt the keeper of the boathouse would side with them.

In this dilemma, he deemed it best to do nothing for the present. A more favorable chance might occur later.

While he was thinking of this the door suddenly opened, and Nick Ripley came out of the room, and glanced sharply at him.

Going over to the bar he whispered to the owner and gave him some money.

Returning to the room, he closed the door again.

A deep silence followed.

Half an hour passed by and Old King Brady rose to his feet, and went outside.

From where he stood, he could see through a side window into the room the gang had been occupying, and failed to see a soul.

Startled, he ran over to the window and gained a better view of the interior.

The room was empty.

A back door stood wide open.

One of the rowboats was gone.

That told the whole story of their escape.

He was disgusted.

Going into the shanty again, he asked the owner:

"What's become of the people who were in the back room?"

"They hired a boat and went away for a few day's fishing on the river."

"Did the lady go with them?"

"Of course."

"How many of them were there?"

"Seven altogether."

"Wasn't that a big crowd to put into one boat?"

"I wouldn't care if there were fifty, so long as they paid me half a dollar apiece."

"Do you know where they went?"

"No; I haven't the least idea."

"Are they friends of yours?"

"I never saw them before to-day in my life."

The old detective could easily see that the boatman was telling the truth and he ventured one more remark, to draw him out.

"Well," said he, "they're a gang of thieves. They've stolen your boat. You'll never see that skiff again. What are you going to do now?"

A look of alarm crossed the man's sunburned face.

He straightened up, grasped the bar and asked tremulously:

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. I'm familiar with that gang."

"This is awful. I must notify the police."

"You should have found out where they were going."

"Oh, what a careless old fool I was!"

The detective walked out, leaving the alarmed boatman wondering who he was and where he had gained his information about the gang.

Old King Brady was now satisfied that the boatman was not in league with the crowd, and he left the shanty and walked away.

Not knowing what direction the boat had taken, and feeling sure that with half an hour's start they were out of sight, he did not try to look for them.

He knew such a course would be perfectly useless.

The old detective rode downtown in an angry frame of mind.

"I've made a sorry fizzle of my work," he muttered. "I hate to let Harry know what a blunder I made. He would laugh at me. As I don't know where to look for those fellows now, I'm as badly off as ever."

He thought over the matter deeply.

Every plan he devised to find the gang seemed useless.

He had to admit he was beaten.

Then he made up his mind to seek for Harry and tell him the news.

As he was not sure of the boy's location he went home. Here he abandoned his disguise. It was now useless to him.

He had hardly changed his costume when the telephone bell rang.

"Hello!" he shouted in reply to the summons.

"Hello—is that Old King Brady?" demanded a voice.

"Yes—who are you?"

"Harry."

"Ah!"

"Did you track the woman?"

"I did. She and her pals got away from me."

"That's too bad. Never mind, though; I've got good news."

"What is it?"

"I don't dare tell you over the wire."

"Very well. Where can I find you?"

"Stay home. I'll be there in half an hour."

"All right."

"Good-by!"

Old King Brady rang off.

The boy came home within twenty minutes.

He didn't say a word until he got rid of his disguise, then he remarked:

"Well, I've bagged the purser, engineer, and three waiters of the Seneca."

"Got 'em in jail?"

"Yes. I caught three first. At the station-house the waiter confessed. Told me of two more waiters on board, who were in the deal. I went back and nabbed them."

"That's all concerned, who were on the steamer, eh?"

"Yes. We put the screws on the engineer."

"Did you get any news out of him?"

"Oh, yes. He told me where Mrs. Briggs lives."

"Ha! That's good news indeed."

"It's my impression she's got charge of the missing

jewels, by this time. We had better get a warrant, and search her flat."

"Where does she live?"

"In No. — St. Marks Place."

"Come on then, Harry. She must have arrived home by this time. And there's every probability that she's got her husband with her."

"I hope so. We'll kill two birds with one stone, perhaps."

They put on their hats, went out, and got a search warrant.

Upon reaching the flat-house in question, they ascended the high stoop and examined the names in the letter boxes.

They hardly expected to find her real name there. But it was in one of the boxes, and they pushed the electric bell button.

The number of the box showed that she resided on the second floor.

After a brief interval a voice came down the speaking tube asking:

"Who's there?"

"Something for Mrs. Briggs," replied Harry.

There sounded a clicking of the latch, and the door opened.

Passing through the tiled hall to a flight of stairs in the middle of the house the Bradys ascended to the floor above.

Here they saw a door opened on a crack, and a servant peering out at them.

"Is your mistress in?" demanded Old King Brady.

"Yes, sir."

"Then we want to see her."

The girl was going to close the door in their faces till she conferred with Mrs. Briggs. But the detectives didn't intend to let her do this.

Before the girl could close the door, they rushed at it.

The girl was pushed back violently as the door flew open, and she screamed.

In dashed the detectives, into the kitchen.

The girl had been flung into a clothes basket on the floor, and was shrieking with alarm, but they paid no heed to her.

With one accord, they rushed through a bedroom toward the front of the house, and heard a clattering of flying feet ahead.

Flinging open a front door leading into the parlor, they were startled to see the door opening into the hall standing wide open.

In a struggling pile on the floor were half a dozen men. Some had escaped, including Mrs. Briggs.

They were Briggs' men. The whole crowd had been in the flat.

Alarmed by the forcible entrance of the detectives, they started to escape.

Briggs, his wife and one of the men managed to get out into the hall.

One of the gang tripped over the door mat.

He fell upon the floor.

The rest stumbled over him.

When the detectives reached the parlor, the whole curs-

ing, squirming, struggling crowd were in a heap on the floor trying desperately to get up and run away.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAST LINK OF EVIDENCE.

"The first one who moves will get shot!"

As this unpleasant cry reached the ears of the struggling mass of humanity upon the floor, they suddenly became very quiet.

There were six men in the heap, and they all knew the Bradys by sight.

As they peered up at the famous pair of detectives, it made their blood run cold to see a brace of pistols in the hands of each officer.

These dangerous objects were aimed right at them.

Not a man dared to defy the detectives in the face of such persuasion, much as they wished to escape, for they knew the officers would not hesitate to fire.

After a moment's silence, the detectives saw that they had the men cowed.

"Harry, put the irons on them."

"All right. Give me your pair."

"Take them while I keep the gang covered."

Young King Brady drew his partner's handcuffs from his coat pocket.

He then tapped the uppermost man on the back, and said:

"Now, then, get up one by one, as I call you."

The first man was scarcely upon his feet before the cold steel band was linked to his wrist, and then the second man joined him.

Another couple were secured together with Old King Brady's handcuffs, and a piece of clothesline, procured from the kitchen, fastened the remaining pair.

"Summon the hurry-up wagon, Harry."

"All right. Bring your friends down to the sidewalk."

They got the smugglers in marching order and landed them in the street.

A huge crowd instantly gathered around them.

Harry sent in a call for a patrol wagon, and Old King Brady asked Nick Ripley, who was among the gang:

"Didn't you all come down the river in a rowboat?"

"Yes," growled the man. "I suppose that's how you got onto us."

"No. Your friend, the engineer of the Seneca, gave you away."

"May the demon blast him!"

"Where's Mr. and Mrs. Briggs?"

"Escaped when you entered."

"Do you know where they went?"

"If I did I wouldn't be fool enough to tell you."

"Oh, never mind. I'll find them soon. You fellows managed to slip away from us on the sea quite cleverly, but you can't do it again."

The crowd began to question the detective as to the cause of the wholesale arrest, but he declined to give them any information.

A policeman now rushed up and scattered the annoying crowd.

"What's this?" he asked excitedly.

"An arrest," Old King Brady answered.

"Who are you?"

"Secret Service man."

"Oh! What have they done?"

"They're smugglers."

"Want any help?"

"Just keep the crowd away."

"Very well, sir."

"Here comes my partner."

"The wagon will soon arrive," said Harry, joining him.

The crowd kept increasing, and the policeman was reinforced by several more. Yet they had their hands full to keep the people at a respectful distance.

Finally the patrol wagon dashed up with some policemen and the prisoners were bundled into it and Old King Brady went along to make a charge.

"Search the flat, Harry," he sang out, as he rode away.

"You can bet I will," the boy replied.

He then returned to Mrs. Briggs' apartments with a policeman.

The maid met him at the door, very much terrified.

"Good land sakes; what does this all mean?" she asked the boy.

"Didn't you know you were working for crooked people?" he demanded.

"No indeed. I never till to-day saw anybody here but the master and mistress."

"Where have they gone?"

"I am sure I don't know. They ran out the front door when you came in the back door. They've disappeared now."

"Who went with them?"

"One of those men. It was the one with the bandaged left hand."

"What did he look like?" eagerly asked the boy.

"A big man with dark hair, black eyes and a big nose."

"What did they call him?"

"John Jones!"

"By thunder, the maimed man!"

No one knew what he referred to. But the boy was delighted. It was, no doubt, the fellow who had his finger cut off—the man who had Laroque's clothes in his valise at the Grand Union—the man whom Briggs had warned to keep hidden.

Harry now turned to the policeman and said:

"See—the row has brought all the other tenants of this house out in the hall. Guard the door on the outside. Don't let anyone in."

"Very well, sir," replied the officer.

Harry stepped inside the flat and closed the door.

Turning to the servant, he asked her in sharp, terse tones:

"Did you ever see that man with the injured hand before?"

"No, sir," replied the girl.

"Ever hear your mistress or master speak of him before?"

"Never. The master's been to Europe. He only just got back."

"Yes—yes. I know all about that. Did he or anyone else bring a parcel in here during the past few days?"

"No."

"Well, I'm going to search this flat. See—here's a warrant giving me authority to do so. I need your help. If you don't unlock all drawers and doors, I'll burst them open. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

Harry then began his search.

He examined everything, looked into every nook and corner, and finally finished, with absolutely nothing gained.

None of the smuggled jewelry was on the premises.

Nor were there any evidences of any other crimes or misdemeanors.

By the time he finished, Old King Brady returned and joined him.

"We've lodged them all in prison," he announced. "The gang is broken up."

"But the ringleader is at large yet," said Young King Brady.

"Did you find the jewels?"

"No—nothing of value."

"Can't the girl give you any clew?"

"She hasn't, as far as I've gone questioning her."

The old detective now turned to the maid, and, fixing a cold steely glare upon her, he asked in stern tones:

"What were Briggs and his men talking about, when we came in?"

"Why," stammered the girl, "I heard them saying they'd made a failure of some work they'd been engaged at, on the ocean."

"Yes. What else?"

"Mr. Briggs wanted Mr. Jones to join his friends. He said——"

"Jones" exclaimed the detective, with a start.

"Oh, yes. He's with these precious scoundrels now," said Harry, grimly. "He and Briggs and Mrs. Briggs escaped together."

Old King Brady was amazed.

"So!" he said slowly. "So they're together, eh? Well, I expected it would come about sooner or later. I'm glad he didn't leave the city."

"I hope you ain't going to arrest me," said the maid.

"No," replied the old detective. "You ain't to be blamed. I don't think you had a hand in any of their deals. Did you hear any talk between them about some jewelry they've got on hand?"

"No, sir. Not a word."

He questioned the girl at some length further, and

"Harry, we'd better go."

"Going to leave the policeman here?"

"Certainly not. Those people won't come back here again."

They sent the officer away, and advised the servant to get another job. But they resolved to keep the flat watched closely, unknown to her, for it was likely Mrs. Briggs might return to secure her valuables.

Then they departed.

Old King Brady had already sent out a general alarm to the police with a description of the Briggses and an order to arrest them on sight.

Nothing came of it, however.

Several days passed by.

In the meantime the Bradys did not relax their vigilance, and kept up a constant search for valuable clews.

At the end of the week, the steamer *Normandie* was scheduled to sail, and Old King Brady went up to the dock to see the captain.

He wanted to get a description of Dan Marsh, the missing steward.

He was the only one on the steamer whom the detective had not seen in connection with the mystery of the black trunk. Old King Brady was very anxious to meet the man and have a talk with him about the matter.

With a good description of the steward, he thought he might find the man.

The captain was standing in the street at the entrance to the covered dock when the detective approached him, and nodded to Old King Brady.

"Well," he said to the detective; "have you found the murderer yet?"

"No," replied the veteran sleuth. "But I'm mighty near it, Captain."

"What brought you over here to-day?"

"I'm seeking for information about your missing steward."

"You mean Dan Marsh? Well, I haven't seen him yet."

"What sort of looking man was he, Captain?"

"Dan? Oh, he was a gloomy sort of a fellow, with a smooth-shaven face. His eyes were dark brown, and his hair was quite curly. He had square jaws, and—yes, toward the end of the voyage he let his beard grow. His face was covered with bristles the last time I saw him. Then he had a large Roman nose. He was a great big fellow, you see, and I suppose he was somewhere near forty years of age."

Old King Brady was startled.

This description fitted Mr. Jones, described by the Bellevue doctor.

"By Jingo!" he ejaculated. "Dan Marsh and John Jones must be one and the same man."

"How do you mean?" asked the puzzled captain.

"I mean," declared Old King Brady, emphatically, "that your missing steward is one of the men who killed Jear Laroque!"

The captain was intensely startled now.

"Lord!" he gasped. "Can it be possible?"

"There's no doubt of it! Did you notice Marsh's left hand when he left?"

"Yes, I should say I did. He had it badly cut, and all bandaged up."

"That's the clinching fact!"

"Are you sure?"

"Positive."

"Then I hope to the Lord you'll catch him and hang him, Mr. Brady."

CHAPTER XIV.

FINDING THE FATAL JEWELS.

"Harry," said Old King Brady, on the following day, as he met his protege in the Central Office. "I've cleared up the mystery."

"What mystery?" asked the boy, anxiously.

"About Mr. Jones's identity."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. He is Dan Marsh."

"What! The missing steward of the Normandie?"

"Just so."

And Old King Brady took a fresh bite of plug tobacco, and told the boy all he had learned from his talk with the captain of the French liner.

It is needless to say Young King Brady was amazed.

After a moment's reflection, he said:

"Isn't it odd, in this case, that we've hunted down every clew but the right one? Now you've looked up all the passengers and crew of the Normandie except Marsh. It's funny his sudden and mysterious disappearance didn't arouse our suspicions more. The case is as plain as daylight now. Marsh and Briggs must have killed poor La-roque, in order to rob him."

"And they succeeded in their plot."

"Yes, but they've got to take the consequence now."

"Probably they will, if we ever catch them."

"Have you heard anything about them lately?" asked Harry.

"No. They are remaining very quiet, and are safely hidden."

"That state of affairs can't last forever."

"No. But the question is, how can we draw them from cover?"

"We'll have to put up a job on them, I suppose."

"Have you any special plan to suggest?" asked Old King Brady.

"Yes. We must throw out a bait, by offering to buy jewelry——"

"Nonsense! That's no good. They wouldn't nibble. They are too wary. Each of them has plenty of ready money. They won't try to sell that smuggled jewelry for months yet. Not until this row blows over. Even then they are apt to get rid of it out of New York."

"Well, what do you purpose doing then?"

Old King Brady smiled, and drew a newspaper from his pocket.

Pointing at a 'personal' on the front page, he said:

"I am trying an experiment on our birds. Read that."

The advertisement was worded as follows:

"BRIGGS: Unless I hear from you at once, I shall sell the furniture to pay my wages. N."

Harry looked puzzled.

"What does this mean?" he asked.

"It means that Mr. Briggs' servant will sell the contents of the flat to pay herself what is due to her unless the lady writes to her servant, Nora."

"That much is plain. Did you put it in the paper?"

"Of course."

"But what's the sense of it?"

"Simply this, a letter from Mrs. Briggs, if posted in New York by her or either of her two male companions, will betray their location to us."

"How?"

"Every policeman in the city is furnished with a good description of these rogues, and has been ordered to closely watch the letter boxes and post office stations. They have orders to arrest our quarry on sight. They may fail to do this. But the letter will show what station it was posted in."

"I see."

That will give us a clew to their whereabouts.

"Suppose the woman writes and posts it in a different locality."

"It isn't probable. Nora has got a new job. I've got the key to the flat letter-box. We are sure to get a reply if Mrs. Briggs sees that personal. You know a woman is very particular, as a general rule, about the contents of her home. It is sure to contain many things she wouldn't have sold for any price. I rely on that trait to stir up this woman."

"Well, if the plan fails, we shall have to try something else."

The detectives hovered about the flat all that and the next day.

About five o'clock the postman arrived with a letter.

It was addressed to the servant, and was dropped in the letter box.

No sooner was the letter carrier gone, when Old King Brady had the letter.

It was written in a woman's handwriting, and had been posted at Station O, on the west side of the town, at 10:30 that morning.

The number 2 was penciled on the corner close to the stamp.

Tearing the envelope open, he read the contents aloud, and saw that it contained a twenty-dollar bill.

It was worded this way:

"DEAR NORA: I read your personal. Enclosed is money to pay your wages for two months."

care of the flat during my absence. Do not sell anything. Above all, do not let anybody know that you heard from me. Say nothing about my affairs to any one. In a short time I will return to you. Do not allow any person to enter my rooms. We will pay you well, if you are true to us,
MRS. BRIGGS."

The detective put the letter in his pocket.

"You see, my plan operated," said he.

"Fairly well," Harry replied. "The woman escaped the vigilance of the watchers, though, when she posted, or had that letter posted."

"Let's go over to the precinct in which the letter was mailed. By asking the policeman on duty at the post in which the post office is located we may get some news of importance."

They crossed the city.

Having reached the station and told the captain what they wanted, he sent for the officer who was on duty near the post office that morning.

But he had not seen any one answering the looks of the Briggses or Marsh.

Then the detectives went to the post office.

Handing the envelope to the stamp clerk Old King Brady asked him:

"Did you write that figure 2 on this envelope about 10 or 10:30 this morning?"

"Yes, I did," replied the clerk. "That's my writing."

"How came you to put it there?"

"Why, little Katie Kelly, the deaf girl, brought the letter in, and asked how much the postage would be, as the letter seemed heavy enough to cost double postage. As I didn't want to yell at her, I wrote the cost on the envelope."

"Oh—yes—I see. But who is little Katie Kelly?"

The daughter of the Irish Jew who runs the pawnbroker's shop down on Hudson street near Tenth."

The detectives exchanged meaning glances.

Old King Brady then thanked the clerk and they went out into the street.

Here Harry vented a long, low whistle.

"Nailed!" he muttered.

"Looks as if we had them," laughed Old King Brady.

They hastened down to the pawnshop.

It was a dingy-looking little store, the window containing the usual assortment of articles those delectable brokers have for sale.

Both detectives knew the owner, Mike Kelly, to be a notorious fence for all sorts of crooks, and often had him under suspicion.

Pushing open the door, they entered.

The Jew with an Irish name was behind the counter.

He was a little man in a vest, with no collar on, and had a pair of spectacles on the bridge of his enormous nose.

He wore a mustache and side whiskers and had very thick lips.

"Holy smoke," said he, upon recognizing the detectives.

"B'ish de Pradye."

For a moment it looked as if he was going to make a wild

dash for the room behind his office. But Old King Brady reached over the counter as quick as a flash and caught him by the arm.

"Keep still!" commanded the officer.

"Py shiminy, I'm pinched!" growled the Jew.

"Where's Briggs and Marsh?" demanded Old King Brady.

"So help me Moses, I don't know dem!" declared the pawnbroker.

"You lie! You've got them in this house now!"

"Misther Prady. I hope ter die eef I——"

"Own up, you son of a gun, or I'll yank you right in!" The Jew saw he was terribly in earnest.

He also saw that the detectives would not let him humbug them.

"Mein peesness vill be ruint, if you make me some droubbles here," he groaned. "Now, Mister Prady—goot Misther Prady—why you don'd leaf a poor mans alone mit his peesness? I vos a ver' nice feller, und I don'd hurd no-pody."

Old King Brady did not relax his vice-like grip on the man's arm, and he drew his revolver, and pushed the muzzle against Kelly's head.

"You answer my question!" he roared. "Answer, or I'll let you have it!"

"Holy Kosher," yelled the Jew, and he almost collapsed with fright. "I hope you haf' de curse ohf Abraham, if you keel me. Took id away! Took id away!"

"Speak, you fool—speak! Ain't those people here?"

The trembling Hebrew burst into a cold sweat, and gasped hoarsely:

"Listen vot I dell you. Should't I spoken de druth, you von't do me, vill yer?"

"No. Let it rip. And be quick about it, too."

Kelly pointed upward with his thumb, bent over toward the detective, and whispered:

"Dey vos ub dere."

"On the floor above this?"

"Yesh—de floor abofe dish."

"Mark you, Kelly—no tricks, now."

"How you shendlemans could insuld me mit such a t'oughts?" asked the Jew with an air of injured innocence, and a sly twinkle in his bulging, watery eyes.

Old King Brady poeketed his pistol and let go the Jew.

"You're a nice specimen of honesty," he exclaimed in tones of contempt, as he glared at the cringing Jew, who was rubbing his hands together, and watching them like a cat does a mouse. "How do you get up?"

Kelly pointed at a staircase back of the office.

"Dot vay!" he exclaimed. "Make hurry up, or dey may got away."

He came from behind the counter and pushed them toward the stairs with such fervor that Harry's suspicions were aroused.

Up went the detectives very quietly to the top of the ricketty stairs.

As soon as they disappeared, the listening Jew began to grin.

He swiftly darted over to his big safe, opened an inner door, grasped a big parcel resting there, jammed on a hat and ran out into the street.

But he had scarcely crossed the threshold when Harry was after him.

The Jew heard him, turned with a cry of fear, and the next moment the boy gave him a punch in the neck that knocked him sprawling.

His head hit the flags and knocked the sense out of him.

Stunned, he was helpless and Harry dragged him inside again.

Old King Brady had come down.

The boy brought in the bundle and opened it.

"There was something suspicious in his actions," said Harry.

"What's in this bundle?" asked Old King Brady.

By this time Harry had the parcel opened.

The package was full of magnificent jewelry set with precious stones.

Both detectives recognized it at a glance.

It was the smuggled jewelry Jean Laroque had brought from France—the fatal jewels that cost the little Frenchman his life.

The Bradys were delighted.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

Harry went outside, and found a policeman. He gave the officer some orders and while the patrolman was in the pawnshop with the door locked, guarding the Jew and the treasure, the detectives went upstairs.

There was a door at the head of the stairs, and they burst it open and rushed into a dimly lit room occupied by a woman who was sewing.

She started up with a cry of affright.

"Mrs. Briggs!" exclaimed Harry, recognizing her.

"Great Heavens, we are lost! It's those detectives!" she gasped faintly.

Then she acted as if she was going to rush into the next room, but the two detectives forestalled her by going in first, on a run.

It was a bedroom, and was occupied by Briggs and another man.

They had been sitting at a table playing a game of cards when the officers broke in on them, and they sprang to their feet.

The man with Briggs tallied with the description of Dan Marsh.

Both men were pale and determined-looking as they faced the man hunters.

Their desperation was shown when they each drew a pistol, and, aiming at the Bradys, began firing at once.

One of the bullets grazed Harry's cheek. The rest missed.

The boy sprang at Marsh like a tiger, and before the man could do any more damage Harry knocked the pistol from his hand and seized him by the throat.

Marsh could not use his wounded hand.

This gave Young King Brady a great advantage, and the boy knocked him down and fought to get the handcuffs on him.

Old King Brady fired a shot at Briggs.

It hit the man in the shoulder and a groan of pain escaped him.

"I'll kill you for that!" he hissed.

Then he fired point blank at Old King Brady.

That bullet would have pierced the detective's breast had it not been deflected by striking against his shield. As it was, it did no harm, and the officer made a rush for his man, to grapple him. In this he might have succeeded, had not Mrs. Briggs seen her husband's danger. Like an infuriated lioness, she picked up a chair and hurled it at the detective. It struck him on the head and knocked him down.

"Run, Peter, run!" she shrieked.

Briggs rushed for the stairs, but she waved him back.

"No—no! Not that way!" she cried frantically. "The shop has got police officers in it. I saw them just now."

Like a hunted animal the man turned toward the front window.

It was open, and he sprang upon the ledge.

He intended to drop down to the street, as that was the only other avenue to escape, but glancing back he saw Old King Brady aiming a pistol at him.

Bang! went the detective's revolver.

At the same moment, to save himself, Briggs leaped recklessly from the window and the woman uttered a piercing shriek of despair.

Old King Brady rushed to the window.

He saw Briggs lying pale and lifeless on the sidewalk.

"The man has injured himself!" he thought.

Glancing at Harry, he observed that the boy was rapidly getting the best of Marsh, and then he ran downstairs.

In a moment more he was beside Briggs.

The villain had landed on his feet, pitched over, struck his forehead and cut an ugly gash in it.

The shock had stunned him.

Old King Brady handcuffed him.

As he finished Mrs. Briggs ran out and acted as if crazed until the old detective said to her:

"He's only stunned."

The shots and noise brought a crowd to the spot, but Old King Brady and the policeman carried Briggs inside and avoided them.

Harry had a desperate struggle with Marsh before he subdued the man and got the bracelets on him.

Then he marched his prisoner downstairs.

"I'd like to know what you mean by this?" panted the steward in an effort to appear a victim of an error.

Harry pointed at the smuggled jewels.

"Do you see them?" he demanded. "We've found 'em."

The man scowled, and Old King Brady took the sawyer.

finger from the bottle and unbandaged the steward's left hand.

The finger fitted the wound exactly.

"You can't deny that this is your finger, can you?" asked the old detective.

"No. I wouldn't try to."

"Do you know what it proves?"

"Nothing!"

"Oh, yes, it does. It proves you are Laroque's murderer!"

"You lie!"

"It also proves you stole those jewels."

"You lie again."

"It proves, besides this, that you and John Jones are one and the same party. It proves you had Laroque's clothes in your valise at the Grand Union. The whole game is quite clear. You and Briggs killed the jeweler in his room. In the fuss you lost this finger. You stole the jewels from his trunk, took out his clothes, put in his body, and sent him away. You got his clothes and these smuggled jewels ashore in your own trunk. Then you placed the jewels with Kelly, the fence, to dispose of them."

Marsh looked as if he would collapse.

A veritable panic seized him, and he cried eagerly:

"It wasn't me who shot Laroque. It was Briggs!"

"Then you admit that my version of the trouble is correct?"

"Yes, but for God's sake don't hang me for it. I am innocent. I ain't going to the gallows for what Briggs did, I can tell you."

"Oh, you won't have to, if you make a clean breast of it."

"Proceed," said Old King Brady.

The panic-stricken wretch thought they were going to let him go, and he therefore began to eagerly tell his story.

It was, in substance, that:

"Laroque belonged to the gang of smugglers Briggs managed," said Marsh. "He and Briggs went to Europe and loaded up with this stuff. They occupied the same stateroom on the way back. Briggs and I had done business before. Coming over, he suggested to me that we nab Laroque and get away. I agreed. On the night before reaching port Briggs induced the Frenchman to have his trunk brought from the baggage room to his stateroom. We were armed with the key Briggs stole from Laroque. The Frenchman caught us in the act. Briggs was desperate. He smothered his pistol in the bedding and shot Laroque just as the Frenchman gashed my finger off with a razor. We put him in his trunk, intending to escape. Seeing the trunk passed by the customs officers without even opening it, Briggs sent for the trunk. He intended to bury it in the cellar of the sailors' boarding house. I resigned my job, put Laroque's clothes in my valise, the jewelry in my trunk and went to the Grand Union under the name of John Jones. From there I sent the jewelry to Kelly to get rid of for us. Finding you on our trail, we took refuge here, and——"

"Fool! Fool! Shut up! Do you want to put your head in the hangman's noose?"

This wild interruption came from Briggs. He had recovered, and heard the terrified steward confessing.

Still more frightened, Marsh paused in his narrative.

"Don't mind him. Go on with your story," said Old King Brady.

"No, I won't!"

"But it will be to your interest to turn State's evidence."

"He's trying to trap you!" yelled Briggs.

That settled it. Marsh refused to say another word. But the detectives did not care. He had already admitted enough to convict himself.

Harry asked:

"Where's Mrs. Briggs?"

"Gone," replied Old King Brady.

"Where?"

"She lost herself in the crowd outside."

"Well, it doesn't matter. We couldn't convict her anyway."

"No. To tell the truth, I didn't care to, although she nearly broke my head. She was a good woman. Whatever evil she did was actuated by her love for this brute. I hope she will never see him again."

The policeman was now asked to send for a patrol wagon.

He readily complied, and when it arrived they put the Jew and the two villains in it, took the box of smuggled jewels, and drove away.

When their prisoners were in jail, the two detectives were delighted, for that virtually ended the case as far as their part in it was concerned.

They had not only broken up the dangerous gang of smugglers, but they had landed all parties concerned in prison, with evidence enough to convict them.

The jewels were seized by the government.

All the gang were found guilty and were sentenced to long terms.

Briggs and Marsh were indicted for murder, and at their trial the steward weakened again and made a full confession.

The result was that he had his own sentence reduced to a few years in prison, but he was glad to escape with his life.

Briggs was proved guilty of the murder.

He was sentenced to execution.

The law never took its course, however, for in a fit of desperation he eluded the vigilance of his guards and committed suicide.

His wife was never seen in New York again, and old Mike Kelly, after giving his testimony, was allowed to go home.

In the pursuit of stranger mysteries than this was we will soon meet the famous detectives again.

Until then let us draw the curtain.

THE END.

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